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## Restructuring Teacher Education Curriculum Towards Functionality For National Development

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### Abstract

The paper explored the strategies for restructuring teacher education curriculum towards functionality and employability of its recipients as an effective means for national development, especially in this 21<sup>st</sup> century of rapid technological advancement. Education systems must seek to address the needs of every society and overall global demand through application of functional approach to curriculum contents. This paper highlighted the significance of enhancing the curriculum contents of teacher education in Nigeria and in designing relevant curriculum, that will contribute to human capital development in 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers. The paper discussed the concept of curriculum, and the compelling need for restructuring teacher education curriculum towards functionality. It made attempt to provide valuable awareness in the direction of acquisition of additional skills such as creativity, entrepreneurship and technology. It also highlighted the pivotal role of curriculum in shaping the nation's economy. Finally, it addressed the transformative perspective of the recipients as a guarantee for employability and functionality in navigating the nation towards sustainable development. The paper recommended that teacher education curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate additional skills as a safe guide and an alternative means for survival when exposed to labour market.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Functionality education, Teacher education, National Development, Human Capital Development.

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### Introduction

The evolving dynamics of global education necessitate a continual reassessment and restructuring of teacher education curricula to align with the demands of national development. In many countries, the quality of teacher education has a profound impact on the broader educational system and, by extension, on national development. This is particularly critical as nations strive to equip their citizens with the skills and

knowledge required to navigate the complexities of the 21st century. In Nigeria, the national policy on education stipulates that the quality of instruction at all levels of education shall be oriented towards acquisition of functional skills and competencies necessary for self-reliance (FRN, 2014). Furthermore, Emesiobi and Ochoma (2022) added that education as a discipline is meant to develop the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in a learner since it is a three dimensional reality and scheme that must be properly developed to attain the true concept of an educated man.

The concept of functionality in education pertains to the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings. Cambridge.org defined functionality as the quality of being useful, practical and right for the purpose for which something was made, it is a state of being useful. For a teacher education curriculum to be truly functional, it must not only impart theoretical knowledge but also foster practical skills, critical thinking, and adaptability. Asaju and Sunday (2014) argued that education as a process of teaching and training in schools must be geared towards the development of knowledge and skills, preparing the individual for functional living in the society. Functional education is therefore necessary to ensure that future educators are not only well-versed in pedagogical practices but are also capable of implementing these theories effectively within and outside diverse classroom environments.

In the context of national development, a functional teacher education curriculum serves as a cornerstone for societal progress. It prepares educators who can cultivate a generation of learners equipped to contribute meaningfully to economic, social, and technological advancements (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). This alignment between education and national development objectives necessitates a curriculum that is responsive to the specific developmental goals of a country, whether they pertain to economic growth, social cohesion, or technological innovation. Asaju and Adagba (2014) emphasized that functional education will usher in high level manpower that is capable of turning available resources into wealth. Nwaka (2012) asserted that there is need for an overhaul of the educational programmes and the implementation processes of education in order to ensure the relevant curriculum, right human and material resources are employed.

On this regard, it is pertinent that every facet of teacher education programmes should be restructured towards inclusion of creative/entrepreneurial skills and technological knowledge as alternative means of survival of the beneficiaries of the programme and to increase their efficiency.

### **Conceptual Clarification Curriculum**

The origin of the word curriculum has been traced from the latin word 'currus', which means to run a race, this race is comprehensive in nature because in the course of the race, the child or the learner encounters a lot of experiences, which may be intellectual, social, moral, spiritual or physical (Ochoma, 2017). In the discussion of curriculum Onwuka (1981) cited in Achuonye and Ajoku (2013) opined that curriculum embraces purposeful experiences provided and directed by educational institution to achieve predetermined goals. Ajoku (2001) cited in Achuonye and Ajoku (2013) asserted that some writers think of curriculum as the following;

- The total learning experiences by means of which the school educates the young and inexperienced member of the society

- Learning experiences planned and directed by the school for the purpose of enabling the learners to acquire basic skills, competencies knowledge and positive behaviours in order to be able to function appropriately in the society.
- The sum total of the means applied by institution of learning to promote what Society and educators considers desirable learning.
- The formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge, understanding, develop skills and other attitudes appreciations and values under the auspices of the school

Educational Curriculum of a nation reflects the national needs, aspirations and goals of the country, therefore, it is regarded as a mechanism for national development because it provides guidelines on what the system should accomplish with respect to the needs and interest of the citizens of the country and the quest to meet the global standard of education.

The curriculum of academic institutions at all levels, originates from the contributions of various stakeholders such as the labour market, learners, subject specialists, publishing houses, professional bodies among others. This is why the issue of curriculum restructuring in teacher education cannot be overemphasized in seeking national development to keep the learners abreast with trending educational programmes within the global academic field. In support of this view Wada (2013) affirmed that educational curriculum restructuring is an essential ingredient for nation-building.

### **Teacher Education and goals of teacher education in Nigeria**

Teacher education in Nigeria is traceable to the advent of the Christian Missionaries. Oyeleke, Akinyeye and Opeloye (2013) cited in Osuji and Taiwo (2019) confirmed that the rise of modern teaching profession in Nigeria coincided with the coming of Christian missionaries who held tenaciously to the belief that proper Christianization of Africa hinges on impartation of western education. The emergent need for evangelizers then saw to the engagement of untrained and unskilled teachers, notwithstanding that they met the demand for which they were engaged. This level of teachers dominated the teaching profession until there was a focus on Ashby Commission report on Investment in Higher Education in 1960. Osuji (2009) in Osuji and Taiwo (2019) asserted that the report which was set up for Post-School certificate and Higher Education brought about establishment of Advanced Teacher Training Colleges (now Colleges of Education) as from 1962 to produce well-qualified non-graduate teachers to teach lower classes in secondary schools. Then from there, universities started offering degree programmes in education to produce graduate teachers and post degree programmes in education for post graduate teachers till date. Teacher education is an organized institution designed for the professional training of those who engage in the art and science of teaching. Osuji (2009) cited in Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee (2016) opined that teacher education is the professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge that will make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of the society at any point in time. It includes education of pre-service and in-service teachers. Ekima and Agih, (2023) added that teacher Education is the type of tertiary Education that is responsible for the production and training of School or College graduates who can function with the right type of attitudes and skills for the survival of the individuals and the society

In recognition of the pivotal role of qualified teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) highlighted the goals of teacher education to include the following;

1. produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system
2. encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
3. help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
4. enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession;
5. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations. (FRN, 2014).

Adewuyi and Ogunwuyi, (2002) in Ogunyinka, et al (2015) further buttressed that teacher education is the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period for the preparation of individuals who intends to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens. Jokthan (2012) having examined the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria recommended that teacher education in the 21st century should provide opportunities for teachers to have appropriate knowledge and skills to meet the new needs of school and society, most particularly as a result of increasing globalization and the use of information and communication technologies.

### **National development**

National development as a concept emphasizes on the process of improving the standard of living or quality of all humans. It connotes the ability of a state to provide a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and elimination of poverty though the provision of adequate welfare package such as food, shelter and clothing to its citizens. This implies socio-economic growth, social justice and positive changes and social relationship, intergovernmental relationship, popular participation in politics and overall restructuring and transformation of the society Ugwu (2015). National development implies:

- Increased capacity to regulate internal and external relations.
- Increase in ability to guard national independence
- Self-sufficiency in food production
- High level of employment
- Equalization in the distribution of social services
- Self-Reliance
- Independent control of the Economy
- Equalization of Economic opportunity
- Ability to solve internal problems
- Greater share of international trade and provision of quality Education

It then means that a developed country should be peaceful in nature, economically buoyant, environmentally secured, socially organized and politically democratic.

### **Functional education**

Education in the 21st century can be defined as a constantly changing process that aims at equipping educators and learners with the technological competencies, pedagogical skills and knowledge, and the right mindset needed to succeed in a dynamic world. Amie-Ogan and Amie Ogan (2015) described education as a tool for

a nation's industrialization and all round development; that aids individuals to become functional participant in the society through its rudiments of character training, respect for elders, spatial skills, language skill, and vocational skill, psychological, emotional and intellectual development. This suggests that education is a mechanism for all round development of an individual which will invariably affect the nation positively. Okojie (2013) maintained that education is a process for manpower development which is necessary for the achievement of rapid development in any country. This implies that education aids human and nation development. UNESCO (2015) opined that education in the 21st century must prepare learners for a rapidly changing and interconnected world in which they will need to navigate complex systems and problems, work collaboratively, think critically and creatively, and be innovative and adaptable. Amaele (2019) asserted that education system in this respect is expected to produce a balanced personality in area of intelligence, skill acquisition, character molding and attitudinal excellence. This idea points out that education should be structured to meet the genuine needs and demands of Nigerian citizens and should target on human and national development.

One of the earliest definitions of functional education was offered by Zeilberger (1961) as education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment, its purpose is to develop the life of the mind, which acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future (Agbo, 2014). Functional education is seen as the process through which an individual is transformed into a participant in the social and economic development of his society. In the same way Unachukwu (2019) held that because it gives the individual the opportunity of living within and contributing to the economic development of his society, "a functional educational system takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labour market, equips its graduates with occupational skills and competencies to enable them be self-reliant"

Ben-yunusa (2005) in Ajoku (2024) in support of this view cited that functional education is creative in nature and deals with practical application of knowledge. It then implies that teachers are expected to be well-informed about such innovations in order to produce functional citizens, who would contribute to the development of the society and nation at large. Offorma (2010) declared that Nigerian citizens need education that would be practical and skill development-oriented or functionally-driven to fortify its youths with skills needed to perform contemporary tasks. Functional education is therefore any form of education that equips the individual with the required skills to contribute positively to the cultural, social and economic transformation of his society.

### **Theoretical perspective**

This paper is anchored on the theory of functionalism introduced by Talcot Parsons(1902-1979) in Truman (2015), this theory in social sciences is based on the premise that all aspect of a society (institutions) serve a purpose and that all are indispensable for the long-term survival of the society. The theory of functionalism focuses on the action performed in the society by individuals or institutions which portrays the society as a social system embracing various social institutions. The function of any part of society such as the citizens is geared towards meeting society's functional requirements, which must be met for the survival of the entire society.

### **Need for teacher education curriculum restructuring**

The 21st century learning calls for 21st century teaching. 21st century teaching involves a balance of objectives of a teacher with the needs and input of the students (McCoog, 2014; Boholano, 2017) as cited in Osuji and Taiwo (2019). Thus, as the standards for the 21st century learner/child are raised, the 21st century teachers will also need the right values, skills and knowledge to be effective practitioners who will bring about the desired outcomes of education. Invariably, teacher education curriculum in Nigeria should not only reflect the contemporary challenges in the Nigerian society, it should be structured to shape these challenges taking cognizance of their resultant exigencies and determining direction of growth. Jokthan (2012) in response to challenges of teacher education in Nigeria made the following contributions amongst others

1. Teacher education in the 21st century should provide opportunities for teachers to have appropriate knowledge and skills to meet the new needs of school and society, most particularly as a result of increasing globalization and the use of information and communication technologies.
2. The curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure that it supports the development of the above

In the same vein Iwuamadi and Anyanwu (2016) suggested the following as best practices for the 21st Century teacher education in Nigeria:

1. Teacher education curriculum should focus on Contextualized Multiple Intelligence and learning ability, students' learning and development; and schools' development. This will offer teachers ample opportunities to individualize, localize and globalize learning and teaching.
2. Teacher education curriculum should have global relevance and exposure; world-class material and related to technological, economic, political, cultural, and learning globalization.
3. The curriculum should also have local and community relevance to offer pre-service teachers opportunities to localize teaching and learning.
4. The curriculum should be flexible and adaptable in terms of learning targets, contents, methods, schedules to meet the developmental needs of individual teachers.
5. Pedagogical practices should embrace the use of information communication technology; facilitate teachers life-long learning, offer teachers multiple sources of learning, encourage a local and global network of learning, and should equally be enhanced with learning World-wide IT pedagogical environment and other meaningful learning infrastructures

Idoko (2024) also revealed that teacher education curriculum lacks the following due to its outdated nature:

1. The curriculum and teaching methods used in teacher education programmes in Nigeria are often out-dated and inefficient.
2. Many institutions still rely on traditional teaching approaches that do not adequately prepare teachers for the modern education landscape.

As a result, graduates may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach in today's classrooms, leading to a disconnect between theory and practice. By addressing these key issues, Nigeria can ensure that its teachers are equipped with high-quality education and support the future development of the country.

### **Relevance of curriculum restructuring and national development**

Curriculum is regarded as a planned sequence of what students are to learn, how

students acquire that learning, and how students' learning is verified (Akpan, 2010). It refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes. In broad and simple terms, the curriculum is an educational proposal tailored towards achieving educational goals. It therefore needs periodical review to meet the societal expectancies.

Nwaeke (2024) declared that evidences from some major developed countries such as United States of America, Britain, Japan, France, and Russia showed that 50% of functional knowledge is required for national economic advancement. This suggests that training of students to be skillful is a hall mark in advancement of any nation. Ajoku (2024) instructively advised that Nigerian government at present should emulate the revolution seen in other countries that has made them great and well developed. For instance the restructuring of school curriculum in South Korea with emphasis on skillful education brought about tremendous technological advancement which led to production of cars, mobile hand sets and other electronics. This in turn brought a tremendous and remarkable change in the economy of Southern Korea.

From the forgoing the restructuring of teachers' education curriculum is necessary to eradicate irrelevant concepts in teacher education and introduce trending ones required for 21st century learners, eradicate unemployment among teacher education graduates, eradicate Poverty, create job for teacher education graduate, create wealth for individuals and the nation, empower the recipients of teacher education to be employable, promote application of new ideas in solving societal and educational problems that will promote national development, promote acquisition of functional education which will in turn promote human capital development and influence national development.

### **Strategies for restructuring teacher education curriculum**

Restructuring teacher education curriculum to accommodate skill oriented programmes in universities and colleges of education can inaugurate a positive feedback that will enhance functionality of the beneficiaries of the programmes and sustain students satisfaction while in school. Disregarding functionality keeps the students inefficiently equipped for the demands of 21st century labor market, hindering competitiveness within their global horizon. To equip students with the skills required by the modern labour market, universities and colleges of education must shift their focus from theory based education to practical centered education.

One of the areas of concern in reviewing teacher education curriculum to empower students to be functional to themselves, in the society and the nation after graduation is to adjust the curriculum towards job and wealth creating programmes as suggested by Agina-obu (2018) who formulated an intervention curriculum that is based on the social and economic needs of Nigerians, which will be co-existing with any other curriculum in the universities. The recommended curriculum covers the following areas:

1. Carpentry and woodwork
2. Welding and metal fabrication
3. Fashion designing and tailoring.
4. Electrical/electronic maintenance.
5. Event management, entertainment and designs
6. Beauty and photography.
7. Bag and shoe production and design.
8. Soap making.

He emphasized that grooming students to be self-employed and also employers of labour will make the beneficiaries of this curriculum to be job creators rather than job seekers.

In addition, Idoko (2024) also stated the following as a remedy to the outdated curriculum:

- It is important for teacher education programmes to align their curriculum with current educational standards and practices. This ensures that future educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective in the classroom. By updating the curriculum, institutions can better prepare teachers to meet the demands of the modern education system.

## **Conclusion**

Nigeria needs to implement functional education programmes to empower educated citizens to function effectively based on the foundations of education they acquired from different institutions in order to improve the society and develop the nation. The high level of poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness and other social vices revealed that the theory loaded classroom activities need to be reviewed. The success of the plan to achieve functionality hinges on adequate restructuring of educational programmes especially the teacher education programmes to accommodate skill and technological oriented programmes such as creative skills, entrepreneurial skills and technological knowledge since education globally is tending towards skillful and technological driven. Inclusion of the aforementioned areas of study will promote job and wealth creation and instill the ability to be employable on the beneficiaries of 21st century education.

## **Suggestions**

1. Inclusion of creative\entrepreneurial skills will help Nigerian universities and colleges of education to produce graduates who are functional and consumable by employers or the labor market.
2. Curriculum/programme planners in the educational sector should aim at educating students to develop the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains to enable them acquire both the theoretical and necessary practical aspects of education which is highly regarded in 21st century education.
3. Experts in Universities and colleges of education should encourage the inclusion of technological knowledge in every facet of teacher education programmes/curriculum to produce teachers who are versatile in every aspect of teaching and learning, this goes beyond grooming learners to pass examinations in various subject areas only.
4. Skillful and Technological oriented programmes should be the focus in this era, therefore, teacher education should not be static and only theory loaded but dynamic in line with the society.
5. Education for self-employment, job and wealth creation should start early in Nigerian primary schools and continue to secondary education to terminate at the university level. Japan is the world's leading economy due to early involvement of their citizens into skillful and technological oriented education.
6. Entrepreneurship Education should be made compulsory for all Nigerian schools from primary to university students as a prerequisite for graduation to enable the beneficiaries of all levels of education to acquire adequate skills and ability to be functional to create job and wealth in order to improve the society and develop the nation.

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