

Qualitative Study on Curriculum Development Trends in Teacher Education Programs in Nigeria: Challenges and Remedies

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Abstract

Education in general and teacher education in particular is germane to growth and development of knowledge and the society in general, but it is unfortunate that teacher education today is beset with systematic and operational problems. Teacher education curriculum is being faulted for its ineffectiveness to provide learners with adequate intellectual and professional background which makes them to be stunted academically and professionally. The paper therefore, highlights the importance of teacher education, the relationship that exist between teacher education and the curriculum, while the paper also, pointed out the irrelevance of today's teacher education curriculum, because it has isolated today's teacher from the realities of the modern world and why it is important to move with the new trends in curriculum development and design, as well the need to incorporate new methods in preparing the 21st century teachers which must find its way into the teacher education curriculum. Finally, the paper draws conclusions based on the fact that it is only when and if teachers are made to be a part of the development and designing of the curriculum in Nigeria, to suggest innovative contents and ideas that we can have a functional teacher education curriculum

Key words: Education, Teacher Education, Curriculum, Curriculum Development

Introduction

The Concept of Education

Education is seen as an important part of raising learners and preparing them to live successful lives and that is why educators and scholars have posited that the quality of every society is largely dependent on the quality of its educational systems, this is because all over the world, education is seen as the instrument for growth and development as well the ability to harness and manage the resources (human and natural) in the environment to make it functional (Dangara, 2016). This is an indication that education has the capacity to enable one develop his/her innate potentials, and build man to think and reason so as to put his mind at work for the purpose of development. Lawal (2015) describe education as widely been acknowledged as a potential tool for positive social transformation and natural development. While to Osokoya (2003), education involves the transmission of society's cultural heritage, societal values and norms, indigenous knowledge and technology from one generation to another in order to enhance expected future change. In his own words. Adesina (1985), describes education has always been related to variables such as purpose of learner, the aims of the teacher as well as the technological problems of the society. And because, it will be difficult to pin the concept of education down to a particular definition. He therefore, defines education as, the tool for the integration of the individual effectively into a society, so that the individual can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress. But despite the fact that education has divergent interpretations, and means different things to different individuals and scholars, there is something like a common ground to all the definitions, and motives of education shared (Akinkotu and Olufowobi, 2016). A good education should integrate individuals into their society, and any education that alienate individuals from their

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society is mis-education, and because education is a process of transferring or imparting knowledge to the individuals in the society in order to understand what is expected of them or what they should know. This is an indication that education is the development of the whole man, soul, body, intellectual, emotional, and physical being. However, today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of nations are dependent on education, and quality education. So, education is the bedrock and vehicle for the nations development, it is the fulcrum of any societal change that will ever occur, and the quality of education determines the kinds of citizens it produces, and that was why it was clearly stated in the nations National Policy on Education (2013), that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its development. Since education is one of the most important factors contributing to social and economic development, quality education therefore, is essential to ensure that individuals are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in life. Education in Nigeria and in other places comes at different levels, with the higher education as the apex of the formal education structure blazing the trail in matters of development through knowledge and innovation.

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2024) defines higher education as the post-secondary section of the national education system, which is given at the universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology, including courses as are given by colleges of education, advanced teachers training colleges, correspondence colleges and such institutions as may be affiliated to them.

Teacher Education

Teacher education has been discovered to be indispensable of human progress, and that education in general and teacher education in particular, is fundamental to the construction of ideas required in a knowledge driven economic development (Ekundayo and Lawal, 2016). Teacher education programme therefore, shall be structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties (FRN, 2004; 2013). And since all teachers in the educational institutions shall be professionally trained as stated in the policy document. Teacher education refers to a formal and systematic process of preparing would-be teachers for the task ahead, in such institutions specially designed for that purpose. Teacher education could also mean the educational programme that is specifically designed to equip potential teachers and those already on the job with required cognitive knowledge (relevant in their areas of specialization); affective dispositions (good interpersonal relationship and personal dispositions); and psychomotor competences (Suraasa, 2024). Izuagba and Obiefuna (2019) also sees teacher education as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teacher with the knowledge, attitude, behavior and skills they require to perform their task effectively in the classroom. And so, the National Policy on education (2013) asserts that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. So, it was stated in the policy document as one of the objectives that teacher education emphasizes; the preparation of highly-motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all the levels of education.

Quality, however is central to teacher preparation, this is because once quality is compromised, all other process in teacher preparation will be affected (Popoola, 2024). It is in recognition of the importance of teacher quality, that it was clearly stated in section 9(57) of the National Policy on Education that teacher education will continue to be to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning and maintain that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers” pp.33. (70), (FGN). It was in recognition of this, that the policy identified the goals of teacher education to include the following:

- i. Produce a highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the nations educational system;
- ii. Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.

Stressing the importance of teachers and teacher education in Nigeria and corroborating the NPE, the National Teacher education Policy (2009), in its latest articulation of the vision and goals of teacher education in Nigeria in section 7.1 (ii) of the policy; states that Teacher Education in Nigeria is to produce quality, highly skilled, knowledgeable and creative teachers, based on explicit performance standards through pre-service and in-service programmes, who are able to raise a generation of students who can compete globally.

It has been established that teacher education in a nation is vital, as it plays a necessary and increasing important role in human, societal and economic development of a nation (Burton, 1998; Escrigas, 2008). Then, there must be something to indicate the objectives, content and learning experiences as well the evaluation process. This is what is referred to as the curriculum.

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Concept of Curriculum in Teacher Education Programs

The curriculum plays a significant role in the process of imparting knowledge, and so, to have a meaningful education and quality teacher education programme that would produce quality teachers, then, there must be in place a meaningful curriculum that would help in actualizing the objectives of such programme. The curriculum is the instrument through which the process of education is achieved. The reasons why scholars such as Kolawole (2012; Obanya, 2020) posited that the process of education at any level cannot be described without a meaningful and workable curriculum. Hence, it is believed that a good curriculum both in content and design will always help in the achievement of the objectives of any educational enterprise. It was a little wonder that Kolawole (2012) describe Curriculum and Education as “siamese twins”. Curriculum is the means through which education is transmitted. Without the curriculum, education has no vehicle, nothing through which to transmit its values. Curriculum is believed to be at the heart of the educational enterprise and it is seen as the instrument with which to implement societal educational goal. It is the framework that determines everything that goes on in the educational system (Popoola, 2024), and those that are the center of the curriculum are the teachers.

Kolawole (2016) asserts that a curriculum is a pivot on which everything that takes place in the school revolves, this is because, it gives shape and directions to education. From these therefore, he describes curriculum as the “what” and “how” of an educational enterprise. Dada, Kolawole and Arikpo (2012) defines curriculum as “what” and “how” of any educational enterprise. ‘what’ is the content or body of knowledge and “how” is the procedure or methodology to be adopted. Following this lead therefore, Popoola (2024) sees curriculum as the “why”, “what”, “how” and “what” of an educational programme. The ‘why’ is the objectives, the ‘what’ is the content, the ‘how’ is the procedure, while the ‘what’ is the evaluation process to determine whether the objectives were achieved or not.

To Ivowi (2010), he opined that a curriculum is a tool, designed for educating a person to change the orientations, behaviours, actions and values of that person whose concern is not only to developing self, but also the world around him. To achieve all of these, a curriculum must be developed. To Wile and Bondi (2011), they see curriculum as a desired goal or set of values that can be activated through a developmental process culminating in experience for learners. While to Nichols (2012), curriculum was defined as what happens to students for which the school is responsible. It is the sum total of human endeavor geared towards the realization of aspirations of the society through the institution of school. The major variables in human endeavor are the teachers (who implement the curriculum); the student, (who are basically learners that the curriculum is planned for, the support system (from government and private initiatives) and the curriculum planners (who are usually experts that design the curriculum, recommend implementation strategies and evaluate to ascertain the extent of achievability of the curriculum objectives. As curriculum can be described as all learning experiences that learners are exposed to under the guidance of the school. The curriculum therefore, is the most important ingredients of any educational enterprise.

Curriculum Development in Teacher Education Programs

Curriculum development in its simple form can mean all the process of constructing and implementing a curriculum. According to Lewy (1991) curriculum development is not just a process of writing instructional objectives, selecting contents, organizing learning experiences and stating evaluation procedures. It is seen as a dynamic process, that is why Okebukola (1992), describes the curriculum development process as one that is concerned with the questions like who is involved in curriculum construction, what procedure to follow, what are the structure and contents of the curriculum and how is it to be implemented and evaluated when it is developed. However, Lewy, (1991) reported curriculum development to be a more complex process, because it cut across development and dissemination stages. It must however be noted that according to Zais (1976) curriculum development/planning is broader than curriculum design. Other scholars, such as Lawton (1978) and Doll (1964) have also expressed divergent opinions on what differences exist between curriculum development and curriculum design.

Therefore, curriculum development is the process of planning learning experiences for a target group of learners taking into considerations their needs, interests, abilities as well as those of the society. As Hass (1983) have reported, curriculum development is the process of gathering, sorting, selecting, balancing and synthesizing relevant information from many sources in order to develop and design those experiences that will assist the learners in attaining the goals of the curriculum. This implies that curriculum development is a systematic process of collating, sorting and synthesizing information to ensure its relevance to the need of the target population as well the need of the society.

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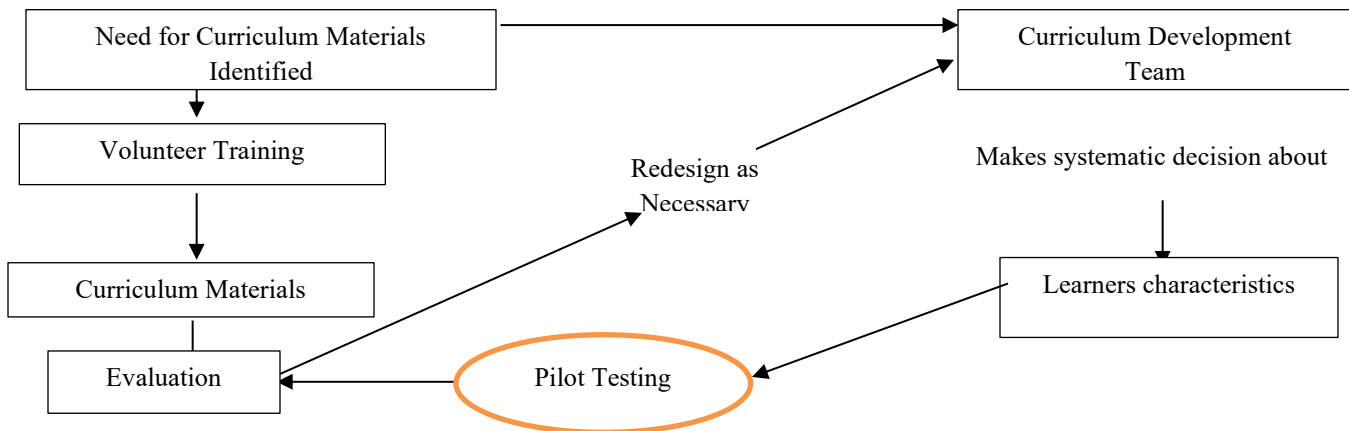
The process of curriculum development also involves the creation of appropriate curriculum materials, such as text and non-text materials, teachers guides and instructional resources that are to be used in the implementation of the developed curriculum. In other words, curriculum development involves the whole process of designing and re-designing of curriculum materials, trial-testing, collating and synthesizing data emanating from the trial tests to ensure that they are appropriate, suitable and will facilitate the achievement of the set objectives. The curriculum development processes systematically organize what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with other components. For example, what will be taught is affected by who is being taught (e.g. age, interest, maturity and level of education). Methods of how content is taught are affected by who is being taught, their characteristics, and the setting. The three above essential components should be widely held on to in considerations for effective curriculum development. The best person that can easily achieve this are the teachers, this is because they are the closest to the learners

Essential Considerations for Curriculum Development

- i. Issue/Problem/Needs of the learner and the Society-What
- ii. Characteristics and needs of learners (target audience)-Who
- iii. Changes intended for learners (intended outcome/objectives)-What learners are should be able to do
- iv. The important and relevance-(content)-What
- v. Methods to accomplish intended outcomes-how
- vi. Evaluation strategies- for methods, content and intended outcomes-what works

Curriculum Development Model

The curriculum development model shows how these components are related to each other;



Source: Overview of Curriculum Development Process. <https://www.fao.org>>.....

However, as laudable as this process is, the success only depends on the teacher, quality teacher in the educational system, that can interpret these processes in the classroom during the curriculum implementation process.

Curriculum Implementation

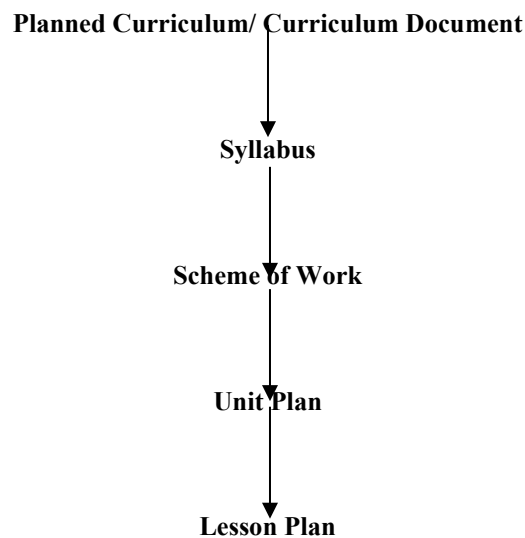
Curriculum implementation is seen as the most critical stage in the curriculum development process, but unfortunately, it is always at this level that we have always falter as a nation (Yang Yang, Wu and Liu, 2013). Curriculum implementation process starts outside the classroom with the teacher making preparation for what to teach (planning before teaching) making adequate preparation for all classroom problems that might likely prevent effective presentation and learning in the classroom. However, the process most of the times ends in the classroom or a classroom environment created by the teacher to facilitates teaching and learning, with the teacher interacting with the learners to facilitates effective learning, using materials that have been developed for that purpose, which is the main reason why implementation is taking place. That is why, what the teacher does or cannot do, what the teacher know, or do not know, has a lot of implication (effect) on the learner (Popoola, 2024).

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Braimoh, (2017), describe curriculum implementation as a deliberate plan through which learners will be made to interact with the content knowledge, learning activities and learning materials to acquire expected learning outcomes. To Izuagba (2012), curriculum implementation takes place in the classroom, it is the execution of the planned curriculum using curriculum materials that have been developed for that purpose. At this stage, the learner for whom the programme is planned interact with the content and materials in order to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. She posited that the arduous task of implementing the curriculum lies on the teacher.

Therefore, curriculum implementation is the process of putting all that has been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combine efforts of teachers, learners, school administrators, and parents, as well as interaction with the facilities, instructional materials, instructional strategies and psychological and social environment (Andrew and Henry, 2024). Curriculum implementation process goes thus:



Source: Izuagba (2012)

This is an arduous task that can only be undertaken by qualified and a well-trained teacher that have been specially trained to do so. Ohiare-Udebu, Jacob and Sarafadeen (2021) listed the following as the problems facing effective curriculum implementation as;

- i. Inadequate funding
- ii. Shortage of curriculum experts
- iii. Inadequate infrastructure, and
- iv. Brain-drain

Unfortunately, the main problem of curriculum implementation has always been the non-involvement of teachers (lecturers) even those at the teacher preparation institutions whose axe of implementing the curriculum falls upon. They are the one who interpret the curriculum, they are the closest to the learners, and they are the one who serves as the middle men between the learners, the curriculum and the society in the development of the curriculum that they are meant to implement. Scholars, such as (Onyeachu, 2008; Kolawole, 2011; and Adewuya, 2013) reported that in Nigeria, the critical agents (teachers/lecturers) who will interpret and implement the curriculum were not always involved in the process of designing and development of the curriculum at all levels of the nation's education system, and the danger in this is that many teachers (lecturers) are not always aware of the curriculum they implement, which will always mar the effective implementation of the curriculum.

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Kolawole, (2006) reported that most teachers (lecturers) even in most teacher preparation institutions do not know what a curriculum means until they come in contact with one in the classroom (which is mostly a syllabus or course outline). Supporting this, Philip-Ogoh and Okloho (2013) reported that teachers in most cases do not understand their roles and neither were they conversant with the objectives of the curriculum. This is the basis upon which Kabir (2014), noted that, for successful implementation of the curriculum, and to achieve its objectives, opportunity must be created for teachers (lecturers) to participate in curriculum development and design.

Trends in Teacher Education Curriculum Development

Having x-rayed the importance of education, teacher education, curriculum and what their relationships are to each other as well the pivotal roles teacher plays in the implementation of the curriculum, it is important to highlight where the nation is headed as far as teacher education and teacher preparation is concerned. A teacher cannot truly teach, unless he is still learning himself, by consistently keeping abreast of current research and pedagogical skills and techniques, the teachers are better equipped to designing an engaging, and productive learning environment. Professional or new developments in teacher education are critical, because they give teachers the skills and information they need to adjust to the ever-changing demands of the learner. And so, teacher education curriculum should be dynamic, it has to be with the changing needs of the learners as well as that of the society (Shibsankar, 2023). However, in the past teacher education was centered on traditional lecture method of teaching learners, and this is because the emphasis on the curriculum is based on knowledge acquisition with less emphasis on the development of an all-round learners (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), most especially skill acquisition.

Teaching and learning in the 21st century ought to have moved beyond the teacher dolling out information to the learners in the classroom. According to Obioma (2007), Nigerian education has some key curricular issues, and gave the following:

Identification of minimum competencies and aligning them to the methodology of classroom transactions including pedagogical skills needed and instructional materials; linking learning to the word of work of learners in the cultural context; emphasis on functional literacy, numeracy and strategic communication skills; infusion of relevant and functional entrepreneurial skills using relevant subject contents as drivers; consolidation of some contents and subjects in the basic education and context thus reducing subject/content overload; the inclusion of strategic life-long skills as well as positive national values, civic, moral, and ethical education as a course of study; infusion of elements of critical thinking and of such emerging issues as HIV/AIDS education, anti-corruption studies, capital market studies.

Unfortunately, curriculum issues in teacher education has also moved beyond these and that is why we have scholars raising concern about the Nigerian teacher education curriculum and the product of such curriculum. Obanya (2020) asserts that there is no functionality of learning, as many graduates of education cannot creatively transfer what they have learnt into real life situations. This might be because, the curriculum experiences are misdirected or that the curriculum content is irrelevant, or the curriculum is not made available for the lecturers' use. Kolawole (2012) posited that despite the efforts made to improve teacher preparation and teacher quality, all is not well with the teachers, teacher education curriculum, teacher preparation as well as teaching and learning in Nigeria. Supporting this position, Obemeata (1995) calls the attention of all stakeholders to the common complaints that new entrants into the teaching profession in Nigeria are no longer adequately equipped to deal with the problems that teacher encounter in the course of their duties. The acquisition of knowledge of the subject matter at the completion of teacher education programme by these teachers is below expectation. Therefore, there is the to revisit the curriculum that produces these teachers.

Major Trends in Teacher Education Curriculum

The teacher, in order to deliver on his duty, must constantly update his content knowledge and pedagogical skills. This is only possible through teacher participation and engagement in continuous development programmes. Education globally has developed beyond traditional and crude strategies of teaching. Students of today are inquisitive and ready to explore. Therefore, teachers have got no option than to move ahead of them. Obanya (2009), Mkpa (2000), Priestly (2011) and Yates (2012), the major trends in curriculum manifest as:

Global developments which now have significant influence on national and regional curriculum actions, there is increased emphasis on skills and dispositions which are relevant to life-long learning, employment and social participation and creativity,

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educational content and teaching-learning materials now appear to be more functional, diversified and operational in nature, movement is now towards information and communication technology, low-cost, portable hand held devices for students use that can be connected through global networks and tailored for specific tasks or application. This advancement in technology is leading to a multitude of approaches that are standing a million of curriculum that caters for the needs of the learners and the society worldwide, and there is emphasis on the need for teachers to use differentiated curriculum, multiple learning styles and engage in transformational teaching.

The following are therefore suggested in the teacher education curriculum and there should be a concerted effort to train and re-train those already on the job through workshops and conferences on the need to move with the world, so that we will not be left behind in teacher education practices and deliveries.

Teacher education curriculum should include the following among others; Active teacher (lecturer) participation in curriculum design and development; Collaborative learning; Experiential learning; Online learning; Hybrid learning; Blended learning Digital citizenship and digital literacy; Genius hour; Gamification and Game-based learning; Metacognition development; Social emotion learning; Bite-size learning; Constructivist learning; Transformational learning and Pedagogical switch

Active teacher participation: Teacher participation in the curriculum design and development process is very key and important. Teachers are the closest to the learners, and because they know the learners and what their needs are, they should not be neglected nor be ignored when developing the curriculum. It is only when this is done that, we can have a functional curriculum that will solve both the learner's problems and the societal problems.

Collaborative learning: This method of teaching allows peer-to-peer or large group teaching and learning. This involves learners working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts or find solutions to problems. Learners teach each other by clarifying misconceptions.

Online learning: This is the most popular trends today and realities was evidently placed on us during the scourge of covid-19 pandemic. But it was unfortunate that many teachers (lecturers) as well as learners were left behind in the online teaching-learning process, because they were not technology compliant. This should be included in the teacher education curriculum and those already on the job should be made to upgrade their knowledge to enhance their technological knowledge.

Artificial Intelligence: Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionize education in ways that we cannot see or imagined. This has the capacity for automation and self-learning. This should be included in the teacher education curriculum, so that when would-be teachers are prepared with this method, they can also prepare their learners with this method and the teachers on the jobs should be engaged along this line as well.

Hybrid learning: This is a method of teaching that combine both the traditional teaching method and the virtual learning method of teaching. Hybrid are most helpful to learners who for one reason or the other could not access school. Such as sickness, disability and most especially in this period of economic hardship. Hybrid learning should therefore be included in the teacher education curriculum

Blended learning: This is an approach to teaching and learning that utilizes various learning approaches at the same time, this include in-person, hybrid, and online to enrich learning opportunities through flexible and adaptive models.

Mobile learning: as mobile devices are now becoming part of our daily lives, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and other digital devices. They can also benefit us more in learning to simplify our lives. These devices have been an ideal way to keep up with the ever-changing worlds. That is why it has occupied a good position at the top trends in teacher education today.

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Genius hour: This is an approach in education, where learners are guided by their own interest, background knowledge and curiosity to learn. It is an open-ended method of learning, characterized by self-direction, passion-based learning, inquiry and autonomy. Genius hour allows learners to create something personal and compelling, and then be learning through the process

Gamification: This is a process of incorporating game elements and some principles into non-game setting, to teach the learners. This allows for more learner participation and makes them to stay and endure to finish their work.

Personalized learning: in a personalized classroom, learners are given more opportunities to share their opinions and make decisions as well move at their own pace. This type of learning styles acknowledges and accommodates diverse learning styles of learners.

Conclusion

Conclusively, teacher education institutions must show the society at large what they are doing and how well they can do it. Education for the good life has been one of the most persistent concerns of man throughout history. Nema, (2001) noted that teachers have two jobs; they have to teach and they have to learn to teach. This cannot happen except they have a workable curriculum with which to prepare them for the task ahead. Teacher education curriculum according to UNESCO (2008), is to develop in the teacher trainee the knowledge of general education theory and practices, personal culture, ability to teach others, awareness of principles which underlie good human relations within and across national boundaries and a sense of responsibility to contribute by teaching to social, cultural and economic progress of the nation.

However, in Nigeria, teachers are not always involved during policy formulation or development of the curriculum, even though the onus of implementing the curriculum eventually lies on them (Ajibola, 2008), supporting this, Carl, (2002) argued that the voices of teachers have always been ignored or not heard at all. It must be noted here that implementing a curriculum you are not part of its development might prove to be a herculean task for the teachers. One important engine for firing accelerated development in the nation is the curriculum. So therefore, all hands must be on deck to develop a comprehensive teacher education curriculum for the nation's development, with the teachers who are to implement the curriculum taking an active part in suggesting appropriate content and methods as well the materials for effective implementation of the curriculum. The following recommendations are hereby made.

Recommendations

To change the narratives of teachers' education curriculum and teacher (lecturers) education in Nigeria;

1. teachers must be actively involved in the process of planning, designing and the development of a curriculum, so that appropriate contents and procedures will be suggested.
2. Teacher educators should be effectively monitored in curriculum implementation to ensure they follow new trends in the preparation of would-be teachers.
3. In-service teachers should be monitored to ensure compliance with new trends in their classroom interactions.
4. Government should provide an enabling environment by ensuring adequate provision of funds and other teaching and learning materials for effective implementation of the curriculum in the nation's teacher preparation institutions.
5. Government must ensure constant evaluation of the implementation process to monitor the progress being made in the nation's teacher preparation institutions.

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