



JEDA



Journal of Education in Development Areas
UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

Vol. 27, NO. 3 October, 2019

Special Edition

**PUBLISHED BY
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT,
PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA**

TEACHER QUALITY: A SINE QUA NON FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

Dr. (Mrs.) Okokoyo Isabella Ezinwa
Department of Educational Foundations and Administration
College of Education, Agbor, Delta State
E-mail: isaokokoyo@gmail.com

Abstract

Education is an indispensable key to the realization of sustainable national development. However the quality of education depends on the quality of its teachers hence the importance of teacher quality to nation building cannot be over emphasized. This paper attempts to explain the concept of teacher quality, sustainable national development and the relationship between teacher quality and sustainable national development. The paper provides an insight into the various variables in teacher quality such as teacher pre-service training, teachers continuous professional development, funding, school environment, supervision and government teacher policy frameworks. It finally suggests ways on how teacher quality can be enhanced so as to be able to contribute to achieving sustainable national development. Some of which are that the teacher education curriculum should be made more functional and practical oriented and there should be adequate budget by government for teachers' continuous professional development amongst others.

Keywords: education, teacher quality, sustainable national development.

Introduction

Education as a veritable instrument of change is a key factor in achieving a sustainable national development because it unlocks the door to modernization as it brings about changes in knowledge, values, behaviours and life styles needed to actualize sustainable development. This is in line with the National Policy on Education (FRN) which states that education shall continue to be highly rated

in the National development plans because education is the most important instrument for change. Quality education which is an indispensable tool in realizing sustainable national development is made up of a variety of interlocking factors of which one of the most important is good teacher quality.

The strategic importance of the teacher and teacher education in nation building and sustainable national development can

hardly be over flogged. Ukeje in Okokoyo (2007) stated that any nation that is serious about national development must pay special attention to the education of the teacher more than any other profession. For it is the teacher that can lay a foundation for national development because on the teacher depends the ultimate realization of the aims of education, since he is the facilitator that translates educational policies into practice and programmes into action, and in the process of social change, nation building and national development, the teacher is the builder of the builders. Therefore, teacher quality is imperative in our efforts towards sustainable national development.

Nnachi (2008) observed that the teacher is the brain box of educational activities and his position and activities are quite inevitable in championing the educational affairs. This is why high teacher quality is fundamental to high quality education that is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

National Development/Sustainable National Development

Education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability and national development. National development is very broad in scope and also comprehensive. It encompasses all areas of the nation's

development which includes political, cultural, social, economic etc. It also includes the nation's ability to enhance the social welfare of the people. Once this development is achieved, it must be sustained. Sustainable development can be referred to as all the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (Bruntland Commission, 1987). According to Ogwuazor (2017) sustainable development is the kind of development which can continue for a long time with progressive improvement in quality and quantity. The primary essence of sustainable development is for economic and environmental stability. Sustainable national development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems (Munasingle 2004). One of the ways of measuring national development is by looking at the level of realization of the United Nations (UN) 17 sustainable development goals. The goals include amongst others

- (i) End poverty in all its forms everywhere

- (ii) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture,
- (iii) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages
- (iv) Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote life-long learning
- (v) Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls
- (vi) Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
- (vii) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- (viii) Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent employment, etc.

The (UN) 17 sustainable development goals can only be achieved through quality education: Quality education according to Odili (2019) is an education process that guarantees acquisition of knowledge, competencies and skills for living. According to him it creates enabling environment in terms of input and

products that ensures acquisition of abilities for critical thinking. For the nation to achieve the (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the products from our teacher institutions must be efficient in technological process skills, must be able to think critically, ability to identify problems and find appropriate solutions and should be able to apply these skills and knowledge in solving societal issues. These skills will enable the graduate to be employable, it will also help to reduce poverty and hunger, it will improve food security thus improving the nutrition of the populace. This is to say that teacher quality is highly significant to the realization of the sustainable development goals.

Indicators of Sustainable Development

The indicators of sustainable development as developed by the United Nations Economic and Society Affairs Development (2007) are shown in Fig 1 below:

Fig 1

S/NO	THEME	FOCUS AREA
1	Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Income poverty➤ Income inequality➤ Sanitation➤ Drinking water➤ Access to Energy➤ Living condition
2	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Crime➤ Corruption
3	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Mortality and natality➤ Health Care delivery➤ Nutritional status
4	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Educational Quality➤ Literacy
5	Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Population➤ Tourism
6	Natural Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Vulnerability to natural hazards➤ Disaster preparedness and response
7	Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Climate change➤ Ozone layer depletion➤ Air quality
8	Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Land use and status➤ Desertification➤ Agriculture, Forests and wildlife
9	Oceans, Seas and Coasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Coastal zones➤ Fisheries➤ Marine environment
10	Fresh Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Water quantity and Water quality
11	Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ecosystem Species
12	Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Sustainable Public Finance➤ Employment➤ ICT➤ Research and Development

13	Global Economic Partnerships	➤ Trade ➤ External Financing
14	Consumption and Production Patterns	➤ Material consumption ➤ Energy use ➤ Waste generation and management
15	Transportation	➤ Modal split of passengers transportation

Teacher Quality

Teacher quality has a variety of definitions or understanding depending on the various interest groups. According to Naylor and Sayed (2014) some view teacher quality as comprising the training and the attributes of a teacher, others take a more holistic view which considers teacher quality as including the training and continuous professional development of the teacher, student outcomes, the working environment in which the teacher operates including learning resources, and other support, the teacher receives including school management and leadership, and teacher remuneration. Bruntland (1987) states that teacher quality can best be understood as encompassing both quality teaching and quality teachers and as such, includes teacher's personal qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding, their classroom practices and importantly their impact on student outcomes.

Variables in Teacher Quality

A lot of variables come to play in influencing the teachers' ability to perform their duties effectively.

Continuous Professional Development

Teacher Pre-service training programmes rarely adequately prepare candidates for their future positions and their accompanying responsibilities. Often times there are changes in educational policies that have led to changes in school structures, curriculum and instructional methods. As a result teachers and school administrators are constantly faced with the problem of managing a new structure different from the one in use in their pre-service training. These changing structure and curricular coupled with changing educational policies make new demands on teachers and school administrators (Okokoyo, 2007). The pre-service teacher training does not also adequately address the actual realities in the classroom. According to Naylor and Sayed (2014) teacher quality is not fixed at the point of

entry into the profession but can be developed through experience and exposure to ongoing professional development opportunities including in-service training workshops and school-based professional support including monitoring and peer learning such as teacher study groups.

Teachers Pre-Service Training

Pre-service education can be referred to as all training given to trainee teachers before they are gainfully employed to teach. This initial teacher preparation is very significant and a number of studies have highlighted its importance. Darling-Hammond's research in USA (2006) found that teacher preparation and certification was the most important predictor of student learning. Research in India, Kingdon (2006) found that pre-service teacher training has a significant positive correlation to learner outcomes. A number of factors can influence the quality of pre-service teacher education. These include: Admission policy, quality of teacher educators, nature of training programmes, funding, politics, teacher education curriculum, and evaluation process.

Pre-service teacher training is quite important in helping to form the teacher skills, attitudes and values. Lewin and Stuart (2003) noted that initial teacher

education can make a difference to teacher quality. If teacher education is of high quality and well planned, it will provide trainees with content and pedagogical content knowledge, as well as meaningful opportunities to practice.

Poor Funding

Teacher education is poorly funded from all levels of government. This underfunding is evident in the poor physical state of teacher's institutions, with inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials, dilapidating, uncompleted and unmaintained buildings, ill-equipped libraries and laboratories. The national budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is far less than the standard prescribed by UNESCO. This unarguably will affect the quality of products from this system because they cannot plan and execute their programmes as effectively and desirably as they should. The teachers also will not have the needed instructional materials to execute their jobs effectively.

School Environment

Well organized and supportive school will be of immense value in enhancing teacher quality and can make a good teacher to be efficient and successful. The leadership and administration of schools has a direct impact on teacher classroom practices. Naylor and Sayed (2014) stated that

whether teachers attend school regularly, whether they spent time in school teaching, whether they have access to ongoing school-based professional development, all rely on effective and visionary instructional leadership, management and school governance.

Supervision

According to Okokoyo (2009), the growing complexity of education and the need to improve the quality of instruction in our schools have made school supervision imperative. However a lot of factors have over time inhibited effective supervision of instruction. Some of such factors include financial constraints, political problems, insufficient inspectorate staff, lack of co-operation from the supervisees amongst others. Adequate supervision will definitely enhance teacher quality.

The World Bank (2012) identified the monitoring and evaluating of teachers as a critical determinant of teacher quality. It stated that teacher accountability is important to counter teacher absenteeism and ensure that teachers apply their knowledge in the classroom.

Government Teacher Policy Frameworks

There is no doubt that government policies indirectly affect teacher quality positively or negatively, starting from admission policy to recruitment policy. Government policies determine teacher qualifications and licensing, other aspects include teacher recruitment, teacher salary levels, deployment, teacher professional development and evaluation

Relationship between Teacher Quality and Sustainable National Development

The two concepts, teacher quality and sustainable national development have been examined. It is also necessary to look at the relationship between the two concepts.

Education is a veritable instrument of change which unlocks the door to modernization. Therefore education is an instrument for national development. This can only be achieved if the educational system has teaching force of high quality. Teacher quality and national development are interconnected. Good education is anchored on quality teachers. Ebong (1996) stated that education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through formal and informal training of people in the society. According to him, education deals

with mental, physical, psychological and social development of citizens in a given society. The goal of education in power development is aimed at national growth and development. For any country therefore to attain sustainable national development there is need for skilled man power and those skills required are basic ingredients for national development and can only be acquired through education (Ebong, 1996). This is only made possible through education with quality teachers. No educational system in a nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. This means that the success of the system in achieving its goals and sustainable national development, rests on the availability of effective and qualified teachers who are motivated holistically. Wasagu (2006) stated that "teachers are the way to improvement since they are the final brokers when it comes to educational policy". Teacher quality has bearing on society survival since the quality of education in society depends on the quality of its teachers. Education itself can only be human capital development oriented, if it is functional, qualitative and knowledge-economy driven, a delivery that can only be done by quality teachers produced from a dynamic and innovative teacher education system. (Nnokam & Sule, 2017).

From the foregoing it is obvious that teacher quality is imperative in achieving sustainable national development.

Conclusion

This paper has carefully discussed teacher quality, national development and sustainable national development. In addition, the variables in teacher quality ranging from teacher pre-service training, continuous professional development, funding of teacher training programmes, school environment, supervision and Government policy frameworks. It also looked at the nexus between teacher quality and sustainable national development. It is certain that teacher quality is one of the most important factors that determine quality of education and its contribution to sustainable national development.

Recommendations.

The following are some of the recommendations:

- Teacher education programme should be adequately funded by government so that policies and programmes can be effectively implemented to enable the system produce quality teachers needed to achieve sustainable national development

- welfare packages for teachers should be enhanced and non monetary incentives should be strengthened
- Well organized and supportive school environment is necessary and should be provided by school heads.
- Overhauling of the curriculum of teacher education so as to make it more functional, practical oriented and of utility value to sustainable national development
- Professional development of the teacher is imperative to enhancing teacher quality. This should be adequately budgeted for by the government
- The time frame for practice-based learning opportunities during training should be increased from twelve weeks of teaching practice to one full year,
- Effective teacher monitoring and evaluation is necessary to enhance teacher accountability

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