

# Policy Brief



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## Fundamentals of Teacher Education Development:

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### (No. 1) Bringing Back the Teacher to the African Schools

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#### Summary

This first book in the Fundamentals Series explores the progress of education in terms of the teacher. It discusses the history of the teaching profession in Africa and lays out strategies for developing quality education through quality teacher preparation. Teachers are responsible for managing the progress of education through the avenues of teaching, learning, and school management. Although the book was written in 2010, the issues discussed are still important for teachers in the African context today.

#### The Issue

The role and status of the teacher has changed through the ages and the quality teacher disappeared from the African school. Many discussions about teachers were concerned with quantity because there was a growing demand due to increased enrollment. However, focusing on quantity led to problems with teacher quality. As a result, it is important to investigate the following dimensions of quality:

- 1. What education does the modern world require?** The world is constantly changing, with rapid advancements in technology and other means of globalization, and teachers should be prepared for this.
- 2. What teaching can best promote this education?** The principles of transformative pedagogy can promote quality teaching in today's society.
- 3. Who should undertake the teaching?** Teachers are responsible for this teaching but many are not sufficiently qualified to do so.

#### What the Research Shows

- 1. Education in the modern world:** There is general agreement that it is necessary for teachers to develop **21<sup>st</sup> century skills** like ICT, teamwork skills, and communication skills. Today's teacher must be able to adjust to the changes in the modern world in order to prepare students to enter it.
- 2. Teaching to promote this education:** Teachers should use the principles of transformative pedagogy, which are:
  - I. Re-conceptualizing the role and function of the teacher** as the facilitator of learning
  - II. Operating as a creative teacher** who uses activities in his/her teaching
  - III. Transformation pedagogy** aimed at transforming the students in all capacities
- 3. Teachers should undertake this teaching:** Teachers must wear a "**multi-layered intellectual cap**," which means that they must have (1) lifelong learning skills, (2) broad general knowledge and culture, (3) broad field knowledge, (4) specialized in-depth knowledge, (5) knowledge of education principles, and (6) the ability to apply education principles. This knowledge and skills contribute to the teacher's development.

Teachers should also acquire soft skills such as love of learning and knowledge, love of children, self-care in order to set a good example, gender sensitivity, community engagement, acceptance of diversity, teamwork, professionalism, and emotional intelligence competences.

## Restoring the Teacher

Lack of quality teacher education programs has resulted in a lack of teachers. In order to remedy this issue, the following ideas must be explored: 1) Education policy with specific reference to teachers, 2) Re-profiling and re-branding the teacher, 3) Teacher management strategies that help enhance the teacher's self-esteem.

Teachers' experiences in education systems and classrooms can have a positive impact on the types of policies made. To ensure that policies meet the needs of teachers, they should be included in all phases of policy making and implementation. Nigeria's National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) is a good example, using eight principles to address important aspects of the teaching profession.

Today, teaching is seen as an occupation that anyone can do, rather than a profession for the well educated who are interested in the work. Society's image of teaching must be re-branded and in order to do this, re-branding must be a part of all education system initiatives.

Additionally, it is important to appoint properly trained teachers in schools and provide them with professional development opportunities that boost their self-esteem and motivation.

## Restoring Teaching

The education of teachers is a **lifelong process**, beginning with **initial-preparatory education**, continuing to **induction**, and finally in **continuous professional development** throughout their careers. Teachers need support at all levels. During initial-preparatory education, these teachers need extensive practical experiences in the classroom, not only to practice teaching skills but also to become familiar with the school environment. During induction, there is a great need for support and guidance from other staff members and teachers. Continuous professional development must meet teachers where they are in their careers, which will vary among individuals.

There are **five major components to teacher education programs**: 1) Academic subject mastery, 2) Sound knowledge of foundations and principles of education, 3) General pedagogical principles, 4) Subject discipline pedagogy, 5) Practical work in school and classroom settings.

## Conclusion

Quality teachers are the key to progress in education across Africa because they have the ability to transform education. Education today should focus on quality, not quantity, and this includes the education of teachers themselves. Producing quality teacher can transform the image of the teacher as well as improve outcomes for children. Teachers should be considered professionals and therefore receive the support they deserve through policy and practice.

## Recommendations

In order to ensure quality teaching and learning:

- 1) Teachers should be included in the policy creation and implementation process
- 2) The status and image of teachers must be renewed in society
- 3) Teachers should be creative and use learner-centered pedagogy
- 4) Teachers should receive support throughout their professional careers

## About the Author

Pai Obanya, PhD, has worked in educational development in Africa for over 40 years. He was a professor of Education at the University of Ibadan-Nigeria until 1986 and joined UNESCO in 1988. Even now, in his retirement, he is an active advisor, consultant, and researcher in education.

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