

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF TEACHERS

Nigeria's Annual Education Conference,
(NAEC) 2016



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION

Nigeria's Annual Education Conference (NAEC) 2016 aimed at providing an opportunity for communicating research evidence that guides basic education policy and practice in Nigeria. The conference also brought together stakeholders in the Education and policy sector to plan and move the Nigerian education sector forward.

SUMMARY

Under the theme Learning Opportunities for All: The Critical Role of Teachers, NAEC 2016 recognised the importance of teachers. The conference also generated ideas and practical steps to support teachers for quality education delivery. Focusing on the central role of teachers, participants engaged with questions that directly affect teachers and impact on their ability to deliver quality education.

The conference brought together high-level policy makers and leaders in the education sector including the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, who gave the keynote address. Professor Kwame Akyeampong of the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, UK, presented the lead paper. The event was attended by more than one hundred high-level decision makers and education stakeholders at the Federal and States levels. Other high-level delegates include the Honourable Minister and the

Minister of State for Education, the Permanent Secretary, and the directors at the Federal Ministry of Education. The executive secretaries of government parastatals, state commissioners for education, researchers, teachers, education consultants, International Development Partners and investors in education from within and outside Nigeria were also some of the key delegates at the conference.

The Nigeria's Annual Education Conference was established in 2015 and conceptualised as an annual event. The inaugural conference in 2015 was themed "Making Evidence Work for Basic Education Policy and Practice in Nigeria".

The theme of the NAEC 2016 is Learning Opportunities for All: The Critical Role of Teachers. NAEC 2016 had three subthemes: Improving the Quality of Teaching: A Ten-Year Agenda; Developing a Coherent, Systemic Approach to Managing Teachers Effectively;

and Rebuilding Education Services in Emergencies: The Role of, and Support for Teachers. Each of the sub-themes tackled short-term, medium and long-term strategies for improving teacher performance and responsibilities of stakeholders. The sub-themes also sought the development of effective teacher management systems and understanding the unique challenges for the profession in times of emergency.

Through the conference, stakeholders gained a better understanding of the state of education, the challenges teachers face, and the quest to determine priorities. A Listserve community of practice, Evidence for Policy and Practice of Basic Education (EPPBD) was launched, for further collaboration.

Participants recommended that education budget should be increased and that teacher recruitment, welfare, training and professional development should be prioritised; that pro-education policies should be implemented; teachers' ICT skills should be built and that Teacher Management Information System should be developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conference recommended that

1. Existing policies for recruitment and legislation relating to teachers should be properly implemented from state to local government and school levels.
2. A coordinated and comprehensive policy in responding to, and providing support for, teachers and ministries in times of emergencies should be established.
3. Processes for recruitment, training and professional development of teachers

should be restructured. There should be a clear job description and career path for teachers. Professional development should be closely linked to promotion opportunities.

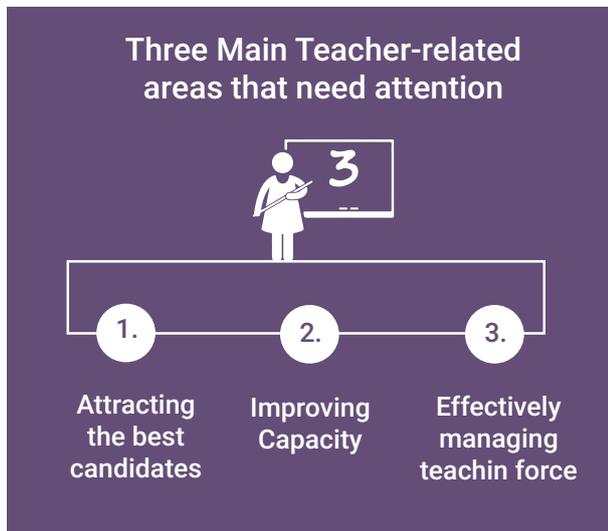
4. There should be a consistent increment in the education budget, towards improving teachers' welfare, safety and security. This will conversely attract best candidates into the teaching profession.
5. Teachers should be trained and equipped with appropriate ICT skills and facilities for quality education delivery.
6. Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) should be developed to include information on teachers before, during and after insurgencies. This facilitates recruitment, deployment and training, and informs mid-term to long-term policy decisions.

PROCEEDINGS AND PLENARY INPUT

The conference presented information and evidence on the current state of education in the country. Participants produced recommendations on how teacher-related issues can be sustainably improved from policy level to practice.

As illustrated in the strategic plan (2016 – 2019) of the Federal Ministry of Education, the Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, presented that with support from International Development Partners, the ministry focuses on higher standards of education. The ministry also recognises that teachers are the key to improved basic education. The minister presented that the strategic plan addresses

key issues of teacher quality and population from entry levels to training, filling the teacher gap, welfare and continual professional development.



As pointed out, three main teacher-related areas need attention: attracting the best candidates, improving capacity, and effectively managing the teaching force. Teaching quality has become a national priority and is only determined by the quality of teachers recruited and deployed.

As keynote speaker, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, underscored the role of government in providing support to teachers. The Vice President also recognised efforts made in the areas of teacher education, capacity building and professional development. The Lead Presenter, Professor Kwame Akyeampong set the tone for the sub-theme discussions. Professor Akyeampong illustrated the current scenario of teachers, advocating that teacher quality be made a national priority in Nigeria. With goodwill messages and addresses from development partners and leading figures from the Federal Ministry of Education, the plenary session was concluded and sub-theme sessions commenced.

To share ideas exhaustively, three subthemes were proffered. The first sub-theme, Improving the Quality of Teaching: A Ten-Year Agenda explored how to develop realistic and practical teacher-centered aims for the short-term, medium and long-term.

The second sub-theme was on Developing a Coherent, Systemic Approach to Managing Teachers Effectively. The subtheme focused on strategies for recruiting the best candidates into the teaching profession in order to deliver improved learning outcomes.

The third sub-theme was on Rebuilding Education Services in Emergencies: The Role of, and Support for, Teachers. Participants discussed the importance of understanding what knowledge and skills teachers needed in order to rebuild education services in emergencies. The session also covered how to support teachers to provide these services effectively and efficiently.

Following the sub-theme sessions, the closing plenary began with an overview and summary of the primary ideas generated. The recommendations from each session were presented by the panel conveners.

To conclude the event, the Minister of State for Education, Anthony Onwuka delivered the closing remarks. The Minister highlighted that the conference has been an encouragement to education stakeholders, signalling government commitment to improve education quality and the status of teachers. Thanking the organisers and supporters of the conference, the Minister expressed confidence that the government would collaboratively review the outcomes of the conference and continue in its efforts to improve the quality of basic education in Nigeria.

According to the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, at the conference, "The future of any society depends on education. Education is, therefore, a tool to empower and increase opportunities. A lack of quality education can disempower and deepen a disadvantage." The Vice President emphasised that part of government responsibility is to support teachers to enable them perform optimally.

The establishment and launching of an online Listserve "community of practice", Evidence for Policy and Practice of Basic Education (EPPBD) was also recognised as an innovation. The community will help to further implement the resolutions of the conference.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Nigeria's Annual Education Conference is organised by Federal Ministry of Education in partnership with the education portfolio of the UK Department for International Development; the Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN); the British Council and World Bank-supported Education Projects: Nigeria Partnership for Education Project (NIPEP) and the State Education Programme Investment Project (SEPIP). EDOREN is managed by Oxford Policy Management (OPM).

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