

# Global Competitiveness: Implications for Teacher Education in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Global competitiveness is an economic yardstick to determine the ability of a country to supply high quality goods and services at reasonable cost, resulting in satisfactory returns that help to sustain high rates of growth in gross domestic product (GDP) over a period of time. Though it is an economic growth yardstick, the countries with the highest competitiveness are those that invest the most in public education, like Singapore, Denmark and Finland. A nation's competitiveness is built on education. Nigeria, which had 48.33 out of 100 at the last competitiveness count, can learn a lot from this. There are several ways Nigeria can use education to build its competitiveness. This paper, however, focused on how practices in teacher education can be used to effect this. It looked at how the provisions of the global competitiveness index can be used to improve teacher education, and thereby improve Nigeria's education and global competitive ranking. Some of the ways global competitiveness can be effected through teacher education are providing competitiveness, providing learning options, the admission process, making teacher education a post graduate qualification, overhaul teacher education curriculum.

**Keywords:** Global Competitiveness, Teacher Education.

## Introduction

Competition has always been a part of education. Whether formal or informal, learners have been graded and assessed against their peers in one way or the other. This has, however, been criticised in recent times with the emphasis on cooperative and collaborative learning (Slavin, 2000). Competition is once again the focus of education. This time it is not competition among individual learners, but among the countries of the world. This is through Global competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2022).

## Global Competitiveness

Global competitiveness, also known as national competitiveness, is an economic yardstick to determine the ability of a country to supply high quality goods and services at reasonable cost, resulting in satisfactory returns that help to sustain high rates of growth in gross domestic product (GDP) over a period of time (IGI Global, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2022). It is a set of guidelines, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. It is characterised as the set of skills and factors that support individual's personal and professional productivity in their communities and the world (Young, 2016). It encourages the development of competence and hard skills to compete in a global job market.

Global competitiveness is notoriously difficult to pin down (West, 2012) and so there are various yardsticks to measure it. It has been assessed using the global competitiveness index and yearly

reports made since 1989, first by the Swiss Institute of Management Development (IMD) in its World Competitiveness Yearbook; and then by the World Economic Forum (WEF) since 1979 in its Global Competitiveness Annual Report (IMD World Competitiveness Center, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2012). The World Competitiveness Yearbook is an annual and worldwide reference point which analyses and ranks countries according to how they manage their competencies to achieve long term value creation. In doing this it focused on 4 major competitiveness factors and 334 criteria. The factors are Economic Performance, Government Efficiency, Business Efficiency and Infrastructure (IMD World Competitiveness Center, 2022).

While the work of the Institute of Management Development is excellent, this work is centred solely on the Global competitiveness carried out by the World Economic Forum. The World Economic Forum has 3 Sub-Indexes that have 12 pillars of global competitiveness on which its analysis of countries is based. They are as follows:

### **Sub-Index 1 – Basic Requirements**

Pillar 1 – Institutions

Pillar 2 – Infrastructure

Pillar 3 – Macroeconomic environment

Pillar 4 – Health and Primary education

### **Sub-Index 2 – Efficiency Enhancers**

Pillar 5 – Higher education and training

Pillar 6 – Goods market efficiency

Pillar 7 – Labour market efficiency

Pillar 8 – Financial market development

Pillar 9 – Technological readiness

Pillar 10 – Market size

### **Sub-Index 3 – Innovation and Sophistication factor**

Pillar 11- Business Sophistication

Pillar 12 - Innovation

### **Global Competitiveness and Education**

Even though global competitiveness is mainly concerned about assessing the economic productivity of countries, the competitiveness of each country is built with education (Valtonen, 2022). Education is one of the major keys for global competitiveness because global competitiveness means developing globally competent people with hard skills to compete in a global market. There is also the need for soft skills like problem solving, good work ethics, adaptability, emotional intelligence, computer/technical literacy, increase the capacity of people to respectfully interact with the world around them and develop the ability to communicate across cultures (Participate learning, 2012; Young, 2016).

Global competitiveness of any country begins with education. The way to develop these much-needed skills in any society is through education. It gives us a means to engage people in productive activities that enhance economic growth and a nation's capacity to address its mounting fiscal challenges; and in most situations, economic growth leads to political stability. It is seen to play a key role in promoting understanding and helping individuals, societies and governments to make informed choices that help solve problems and make people more governable (Prahalad, 2010). It is seen as a tool to help reduce poverty, promote peace and foster development. It is a basic need for

human and national development, escape from poverty and build a prosperous society (Global Partnership for Education, 2019).

In addition, there are 3 of the pillars of global competitiveness that deal directly with education. They Pillar 4, 5, 7 and 12. Pillar 4 is the index that has to do with Health and Primary education. It is partly concerned with the quality and enrolment of primary education. This emphasis is a result of the importance of primary education as the foundation of the educational system. Pillar 5 is concerned about Higher education and training. This involves the enrolment and quality of education above primary education. Pillar 7 is concerned with Labour market efficiency. It deals with the capacity of a country to attract and retain quality labour. It also concerns the availability of all types of labour. This involves education. Pillar 12 is concerned the capacity of innovation from universities, research institutes and the availability of scientists and engineers (Benitez-Marquez et al, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2017). The role of education in global competitiveness means have good quality education system (World Economic Forum, 2012). There are various ways education can help in global competitiveness. Some of these are the following:

- a. Invest in national education
- b. Encourage use of modern technologies
- c. Invest in infrastructure and facilities
- d. Have high ability teachers/students
- e. Match teachers/students with their skills
- f. Encourage collaboration
- g. Create and Encourage innovation and creativity
- h. Align curriculum with global demands (WEF, 2019; Obiora, 2013).

### **Nigeria's Global Competitiveness**

The global competitiveness of a country tells a lot about the state of its economy, educational and technological development. This is because it indicates its investment in various aspects of life. It indicates its ability to attract talent, ease of finding skilled employees and developing unique products that attract higher wages and living standards. With the present state whereby the most common thing people celebrate is getting out of the country, Nigeria cannot be said to be high on the list of competitive countries.

Nigeria's ranking on the global competitiveness list has not been very encouraging. Between 2013 and 2016 the country has had its lowest point at 3.37 out of 100 points. In 2017 it was 4.4% with a ranking of 125 out of 125 countries. The country's highest score has been 48.33 out of 100 points on the last Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum in 2019. With this score, the country was ranked 116<sup>th</sup> most competitive nation out of 140 countries ranked (WEF, 2019). This ranking is not surprising, based on the state of the country's economy in the past few years. Like other countries of the world Nigeria can do a lot of things through the educational system to foster a better global competitiveness ranking. The purpose of this article is how it can use teacher education to effect this change.

### **Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher education is that aspect of education that deals with the acquisition of theoretical and applied skills in teaching (Omieibi-Davids, 2019). It does not only function to produce teachers but as a set of processes and institutions reflect a mass cultural and structural feature both of the educational system to which it is most immediately linked, and the society and economy to which it owes its existence. The general purpose of teacher education is to enable teachers to develop the skills and qualities that will increase their professional effectiveness. The goals of Teacher Education in Nigeria, as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) are to:

- a. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
- b. Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. Help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- d. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations;
- e. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

### **Effecting Nigeria's Competitiveness through Teacher Education**

Effecting Nigeria's competitiveness through Teacher education involves producing a high-quality teacher education system. There are several ways that Nigeria's global competitiveness can be improved through practices in the teacher education process. Some of these are discussed below.

The admission process of teacher education institutions is one of the ways in which Nigeria's global competitiveness can be improved. This refers to the criteria of admitting students. This determines the quality of the intake and quality of trainee teachers. In the 1940s and 1950s, the best students were recommended and employed as teachers in primary and secondary schools by the various missions (Manilla, 2005). This continued to some extent in the 1970s and 1980s when companies deliberately would not employ graduates with first class and second class upper degrees with the explanation that they would soon leave for the university system. From having the best students admitted into the teaching profession, the massive requirement for teachers resulting from over enrolment of children into the free education programme of from 1977 to 1981 opened the doors for every and anyone being employed as teachers. The yearly enrolment increased from hundreds to millions of students. This was not followed by a corresponding increase in teacher (Osokoya, 1989; Taiwo, 1980).

The cut-off points of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) for various courses usually defer. Some of the lowest points over the years are known to be in education. A student seeking admission into B.SC Economics, for instance, might need as high as 250 to gain admission but his counterpart seeking admission into B.ED or B.SC ED in Economics who is required to do more courses in the same university, might need 180 points to gain admission into the same school. Also, while students with 285 find it hard getting placement in courses like Medicine, Pharmacy and Law, admission is given to students in Education with scores as low as 140 in some universities (Schoolings.org; Unilorin Portal, 2022). This lowers the quality of students received by faculties of education. The focus should be to attract the best minds to teacher education, not lower the cut off marks to meet people at the bottom (US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labour and Pension, 2006). This is particularly necessary in 2023 as a result of increased interest in teaching resulting from the demand for Nigerian teachers by United Kingdom and the United States (Oloniniran, 2022). The quality of teachers we export will affect the way other countries view our country.

The universities need to stop compelling students to change to Education. A recent review of over a thousand students in the 3 public universities in Rivers State showed that most of the trainee teachers had not applied to study the education courses they were studying. A lot of these students had applied to study other courses but were compelled to change to education courses because they did not have the basic academic requirements or did not meet the cut-off points for their preferred courses. These students spend the first one of two years struggling to change to their desired courses and so do not put in as much effort and resources as they should in their studies. Compelling people to change to education courses does not enable the country compete globally in any way because such students/teachers put very little effort to be effective teachers and run away from the profession with the slightest opening elsewhere (Lawal, 2019). Teaching as a vocation, according to



Nigeria's Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, goes beyond looking for a job, thus those who go into it must have the desire to be in it (Dada, 2018).

Making Teacher Education a postgraduate qualification is another way of effecting global competitiveness in Nigeria. It is necessary to make teacher education a post graduate qualification. This ensures that only academically sound and able students go in for the programme. This weeds out those that are not academically fit at the undergraduate level. This is the practice with some of the countries that are highest on the global competitiveness list like Finland and Norway, where teacher education is a post graduate programme (Lambert and Pachler, 2002)). This is particularly important for specialised areas like Curriculum Studies, Educational Technology, Educational Management, Special Education, Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Library Education, and so on. Making such areas undergraduate specialisations does not help the educational system because it encourages the production of substandard practitioners who do not have the necessary experience to understand or put their courses into effective practice. A student who has a first degree in Curriculum Studies is very much likely to understand and put into practice what he studies than one with only a secondary school certificate.

There is a need to overhaul Teacher Education Curriculum in Nigeria. The teacher education curriculum should be made to meet global standards. A look at the content of the educational system varies from school to school. The 3 public universities in Rivers State have different curriculum. Students in the University of Port Harcourt have had a different course work from those in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. An undergraduate teacher education student of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, for instance, studies all education courses. His counterpart at the University of Port Harcourt does not do the same. Standards are not the same even inside the country, how much different will it be when compared to global situations. If there is a crisis, like in Ukraine, can Nigerian graduates' teachers stand and excel in the midst of others. The United Kingdom and United States of America are looking for teachers globally, can our product be employed and perform effectively without retraining? The emphasis is on global cooperation and collaboration (WEF, 2022).

It is necessary for teacher education students to have a full course of study of whatever area of specialisation they belong. This is particularly so for students who have double honours courses like Educational Management, Guidance and Counselling, and Library Education. In a lot of situation, when these students graduate with their certificates showing B.ED Guidance and Counselling/Economics or B.SC ED Guidance and Counselling/Human Kinetics Health and Safety Education, they have very little knowledge of the teaching subject reflected on the certificate that they are employed to teach in the school system. There have been instances when teachers with such certificate, teaching in the school system, did not the content of their subjects because they did not study it in school. A lady ran away from her teaching job because she did not know what Basketball was but she was required to teach them as a result of her G&C/HKHSE degree with which she was employed. This happens because students are only required to take a few elective courses in the teaching subjects that do not give them the knowledge of the curriculum of those subjects. Teacher education is meant to produce highly skilled, knowledgeable and creative teachers, and the place to start this process is in teacher education institutions (Dada, 2018).

To be globally competitive we need to move from the abstract curriculum and practices in our teacher education programmes to a functional one that arms our students with practical skills (Lawal, 2019). It is important to ensure that teacher education students are properly engaged in the practical aspects of whatever courses they study in school to arm them with practical entrepreneurship and soft skills, in addition to qualifying them as teachers. Soft skills have to do with social skills like proper communication and human management skills (Kenton, 2023; Danao, 2023; Sharma, 2023). A trainee teacher who takes a course like educational technology should not only have knowledge of the various media to use but be conversant with their production and use. He should have some practical knowledge of ICT and its use in education. A student of early

childhood and primary education should be able to produce songs, poems, rhymes, games and instructional materials as part of his training.

Providing learning options is one of the avenues of encouraging global competitiveness in Teach Education. Modern education is awash with options for learning. The world has gone beyond teachers and learners constantly gathering in the classroom to learn. Effective information and communication technology has ensured that the needs of learners of different type can be met. Thus, it is necessary to create and use content for every platform and attention span. Some of these are Instagram, Facebook, You-Tube, Meta (WhatsApp), Twitter, and so on (WEF, 2022). For the trainee teachers to go on and use these learning options like we want them to, it is important to expose them to it. This is important because the prevailing situations in Nigeria make it impossible for students to be in class every time. These are insecurity as a result of banditry, kidnapping, riots, separatists' agitations, militancy, fuel scarcity and floods which occur in various forms all across the country. Using these media options also gives the students media redundancy. Media redundancy means the learners have an opportunity to go over the work as many times as possible. This is not provided by traditional classroom teaching (Omieibi-Davids, 2021).

Emphasising on effective Teaching Practice will ensure the competitiveness of Nigerian teachers at the global level. Teaching Practice is a teacher education strategy whereby students are sent to teach in real classrooms for a specific period of time in order to practice teaching skills learnt. Teaching Practice is an essential and important part of teacher education. To be effective trainee teachers must practice in real classrooms, teach to practice the courses they specialise in, practice for specific amount of time and be properly supervised (Yusuf et al, 2022). Teaching practice is so important that it has the highest credit load in the teacher education programme. The National Teachers' Policy (FRN, 2014) stipulates that Teaching Practice shall be for one academic term (12 weeks) for NCE students and two academic terms for B.ED students. For a lot of schools, however, Teaching Practice is only for 6 weeks for NCE students and 12 weeks for B.ED. This is only about half of the recommended time (Fatimayin, 2021; Ekundayo et al, 2014).

It is important for the teaching practice units of the various teacher education institutions to insist on the students teaching subjects in their areas of specialisation. Often times, students are made to teach subjects they have no knowledge of in their practice schools. In my involvement in supervision of students on practice teaching for the past 31 years, the observation has been that most of the worst performing students have been those who teach courses outside their areas of specialisation. Examples are Business Management students who have never been exposed to Fine Arts being asked to teach it; Students of Economics being asked to teach Home Economics; Political Science students being asked to teach Physics, and so on. A neighbour's daughter told the story of copying Mathematics note on the board instead of solving Mathematics problems because she was asked to teach JJS maths which her Secretarial Studies lessons did not prepare her to teach.

National examinations will go a long way to improve the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in our teacher education institutions. These examinations which can be set as a collaboration between the Nigeria Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) and the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) will ensure that the teachers being graduated from the teacher education institutions meet the minimum standards stipulated. Such examination will motivate the teacher trainers to put in more effort in their work. This is similar to the national medical examinations undergone by medical students and the role played by the Law School for lawyers (Dada, 2018).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher has to be knowledgeable in the availability and use of innovative technologies. This is because to be effective he has to be able to apply the latest technologies in his teaching. To be effective he has to be able to interact and collaborate with people all over the world. It is important also because technology can be used to address learning gaps and make education accessible to all. The days are gone when a teacher complains about not doing practicals with his science students because of a poorly equipped physics or chemistry laboratory (WEF, 2020). Such

practicals can be accessed online on different platforms and used to teach the students. This is particularly so as most students and parents in Nigeria have phones and actively use the internet. One in four internet users in the world are said to be Nigerians.

Provision of quality infrastructure is Pillar 2 of the global competitiveness index (WEF, 2017). It involves the provision of all types of infrastructures/facilities. There is a dire need for adequate and appropriate infrastructure and facilities in teacher education institutions. There should be adequate provision of necessary facilities in teacher education institutions to ensure that the students who are going to teach and make a change in the educational system in the future are exposed to quality education (Lawal, 2019).

Competitiveness is a driving force that makes people and organisations work hard and strive for development. It is important to provide competitiveness among trainees and various departments in teacher education programmes. In doing this it is necessary to provide an objective and measurable yardsticks and rewards. This could be in form of highest percentage of attendance, performance in various education courses, exhibitions, use of innovative technologies, and so on. This will make the students and departments constantly look for and developing new creations to apply in their learning (WEF, 2020; West, 2012). Scholarships and immediate employment are a good way of rewarding students that excel to motivate others (Dada, 2018).

There is an urgent need for the retraining of existing teachers with new philosophies, theories, teaching/learning techniques and technologies. Teacher education does not refer to the training of new teachers alone. It involves the retraining of existing teachers in the school system. Qualifying as a teacher does not arm an individual with the professional skills that are needed for life. It is important to have programmes in the teacher education institutions for professionally qualified teachers who have been in the school system for some time (Lawal, 2019). This is important because with the embargo on employment that has been put in place by most states of the federation, the teachers are mostly those who were trained when computers, constructivism, collaboration, blended learning and their likes were not the paradigm of the day. The last time teachers were employed for public schools in Rivers State, for instance, was in 2013 (Azubuike, 2013; The Newswriter, 2013). This was eleven years ago. To be efficient they need to be constantly be in tune with recent philosophies and technologies in education. When they were trainee teachers, the age of entry into primary school was 5 years as against the 6 years stipulated in the national policy of 2013/2014 (FRN, 2014). To be in tune to changes in education there needs to be constant retraining of the country's teachers.

## **Conclusion**

Nigeria's position on the global competitiveness ranking is very low. This reflects on the quality of life as a people. The change needed to make the country work can be its teaching force, not the politicians. This is because even though global competitiveness is a measure of a country's economic productivity, the driving force behind this productivity is education, as seen in the countries that have topped the global competitiveness ranking over the years.

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