



## Global Best Practices Beyond the 21st Century: A Call for Skill Acquisition Through Teacher Education

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### ABSTRACT

*As the world undergoes rapid technological advancements and societal changes, the demand for an adaptable and skilled workforce has become increasingly evident. This study explores global best practices in teacher education to address the imperative of equipping educators with the tools and strategies necessary to foster skill acquisition among students in the 21st century. The research discusses the various international models of teacher training, examining successful approaches to integrating contemporary skills. The study employs a comprehensive literature review, comparative analysis, and case studies of innovative teacher education programs across different regions. Key themes identified include the role of technology in pedagogy, the importance of fostering a growth mindset among educators, and the need for continuous professional development to keep pace with evolving educational requirements. Additionally, the research explores the intersectionality of cultural, social, and economic factors influencing the effectiveness of teacher education programs. The study presents the necessity for a paradigm shift in teacher education, emphasizing not only subject expertise but also the cultivation of transferable skills essential for the workforce of the future. Recommendations include the development of dynamic curriculum frameworks, collaborative international partnerships, and the implementation of evidence-based pedagogical methods. This study contributes to the discourse on global educational reform, providing insights and guidance for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the post-21st-century world.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The landscape of education in Nigeria, like many other countries, has been significantly shaped by the ongoing evolution of technology and pedagogical approaches in the 21st century. With the advent of digital technologies, there has been a paradigm shift towards incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the educational sector (Ogunsola, 2010). Initiatives such as the implementation of e-learning platforms, digital textbooks, and online assessment tools have gained prominence, aiming to enhance the accessibility and quality of

education across the country (Akinsolu, 2019). These technological advancements align with the global trend of integrating digital resources into traditional educational practices, fostering interactive and student-centered learning environments.

The 21st-century education landscape in Nigeria reflects a growing emphasis on skills acquisition and competency-based learning (Olibie & Agusiobo, 2020). Recognizing the need to prepare students for a rapidly changing job market, educational institutions are gradually shifting from rote memorization towards fostering

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critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Oduaran, 2018). Initiatives like the National Policy on Education (NPE) have underscored the importance of aligning the curriculum with the demands of the contemporary workforce, ensuring that students are equipped with relevant skills for the digital age (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This evolution in educational philosophy reflects a broader commitment to nurturing a workforce that can thrive in the knowledge-based economies of the 21st century.

### **Global challenges and the need for relevant skills**

Nigeria, like many other nations, faces a myriad of global challenges that necessitate the cultivation of relevant skills among its workforce. Economic disparities, technological disruptions, and environmental issues are prominent concerns (Ogwumike & Etim, 2019). The nation is navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving global economy, where industries are transformed by advancements such as artificial intelligence and automation. To effectively respond to these challenges, the Nigerian workforce requires a set of skills that align with the demands of the contemporary job market (World Bank, 2020). The need for skills relevant to the digital age is particularly crucial as technology becomes an integral aspect of various sectors, including education, healthcare, and business (Olayinka & Adebowale, 2021).

To address the global challenges confronting Nigeria, there is a compelling need for an education system that emphasizes skill development. The current curriculum should be adapted to incorporate critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills (Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, 2014). Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the workforce of the future by equipping students with the necessary skills to thrive in a globalized and technologically advanced world. Vocational and technical education programs are also crucial in addressing specific skill gaps and preparing individuals for diverse industries (Onyije & Anyalewechi, 2018). This transformative approach aligns with global trends, where

countries with robust skill development initiatives are better positioned to meet the challenges of the 21st century (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Given the interconnected nature of global challenges, Nigeria should actively engage in collaborative efforts with international partners to foster skill development. Cross-border collaborations can facilitate knowledge exchange and the adoption of best practices in addressing shared challenges (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2019). International organizations and institutions can provide valuable insights and resources to enhance Nigeria's skill development initiatives. Additionally, participating in global forums and networks allows Nigeria to stay informed about emerging trends and global solutions, contributing to a more adaptive and resilient workforce (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Through concerted efforts both domestically and internationally, Nigeria can navigate the global challenges it faces and equip its citizens with the skills necessary for sustainable development.

### **Addressing the gap between traditional education and modern skill requirements**

In Nigeria, as in many other countries, the widening gap between traditional education and the demands of the modern workforce has become a pressing concern. Traditional education systems in Nigeria have historically focused on rote memorization and examination-oriented learning (Okebukola, 2015). However, the dynamic nature of the contemporary job market necessitates a shift towards a more skills-oriented educational approach. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has ushered in unprecedented changes, demanding a workforce proficient in critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological literacy (World Bank, 2019). This transition has exposed a significant disparity between what traditional education provides and what is required to meet the challenges of the present and future job landscape.

The Nigerian education system, rooted in conventional models, often struggles to keep pace with the rapidly evolving demands of industries (Oduaran & Aluede, 2017). Employers in Nigeria are increasingly expressing



dissatisfaction with the skill sets of graduates, emphasizing the need for practical, job-relevant competencies (Okebukola, 2019). The mismatch between the skills imparted by traditional education and the skills demanded by employers creates a disconcerting unemployment scenario (Oduaran & Aluede, 2017). To address this, there is an urgent call for the incorporation of modern skill development within the curriculum to bridge the existing gap and enhance the employability of Nigerian graduates (World Bank, 2019).

To bridge the gap between traditional education and modern skill requirements in Nigeria, there is a need for comprehensive reforms at various levels. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education, fostering entrepreneurship education, and encouraging experiential learning are cited as crucial strategies (Okebukola, 2015; World Bank, 2019). Embracing competency-based education models that emphasize practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce (Oduaran & Aluede, 2017). Collaboration between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers is imperative to align educational outcomes with the evolving needs of the job market, ensuring a smoother transition for Nigerian graduates from traditional education to the contemporary professional landscape.

### **Emphasizing the role of teacher education in preparing students for the future**

Teacher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape and preparing students for the challenges of the future. In Nigeria, where the educational system faces dynamic shifts and evolving demands, the role of teachers becomes increasingly critical. According to Adedoyin and Ogunleye (2018), the quality of teacher education significantly influences the effectiveness of classroom instruction and, consequently, student outcomes. In a rapidly changing world, the emphasis on teacher education gains prominence as educators are tasked not only with imparting subject knowledge

but also with fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptability among students.

A study conducted by Adeyemi, Adeyinka, and Adedeji (2019) highlights the importance of incorporating innovative pedagogical approaches and technology in teacher education programs across Nigeria. The authors argue that teacher education should go beyond traditional methods, equipping educators with the skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices. This is particularly crucial in preparing students for a future where digital literacy is paramount. The study emphasizes the need for continuous professional development in teacher education to ensure that educators stay abreast of technological advancements and pedagogical best practices.

Furthermore, Oduaran and Olaore (2018) underscore the critical importance of infusing a global perspective into teacher education programs to adequately prepare Nigerian teachers for the demands of the interconnected world. In an era where geographical boundaries are becoming less restrictive, educators in Nigeria must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to nurture global citizens. This entails going beyond traditional teaching methods and embracing a curriculum that fosters cross-cultural competencies.

To fulfill this objective, teacher education programs should incorporate exposure to diverse teaching methodologies. Teachers need to be familiar with a spectrum of instructional approaches that not only cater to diverse learning styles but also reflect global pedagogical trends. As posited by Oduaran and Olaore, educators should be well-versed in employing innovative techniques that transcend cultural and national boundaries, thereby enriching the learning experiences of students and preparing them for the multicultural environments they may encounter in the future.

Moreover, the emphasis on cross-cultural communication skills within teacher education programs becomes imperative. Effective communication is central to navigating a globalized world, and teachers serve as vital



conduits for imparting this skill to students. Training in cross-cultural communication equips educators with the ability to navigate cultural nuances, fostering an inclusive and globally aware classroom environment. Through this, students not only develop language proficiency but also gain insights into diverse perspectives, nurturing a mindset conducive to global citizenship.

An understanding of global issues is another fundamental component that Oduaran and Olaore advocate for in teacher education. Teachers should be well-versed in global challenges, ranging from socio-economic disparities to environmental concerns. Integrating these topics into the curriculum enables educators to instill a sense of responsibility and global awareness in their students. By nurturing a generation of students cognizant of their role in addressing global challenges, teacher education programs contribute significantly to the broader goal of fostering socially conscious and globally engaged citizens.

There is an emphasis on a global perspective in teacher education calls for a transformative approach. This involves not only incorporating diverse teaching methods but also cultivating cross-cultural communication skills and instilling an understanding of global issues. Such initiatives are essential for preparing Nigerian students to thrive in an interconnected world and contribute meaningfully to global challenges, aligning with the overarching goal of creating a socially responsible and globally competent citizenry.

### **Paradigm shift towards skills-based education**

In Nigeria, there has been a discernible paradigm shift towards skills-based education, reflecting a global recognition of the need to equip students with practical competencies that extend beyond traditional academic knowledge. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria underscores the importance of skills acquisition in fostering self-reliance and national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This shift reflects a departure from rote learning and memorization towards an educational framework that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving,

and practical application of knowledge. Stakeholders, including the government and educational institutions, are increasingly recognizing the significance of aligning the curriculum with the skills demanded by the evolving job market.

The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria has taken substantial steps towards implementing skills-based education, with initiatives such as the introduction of entrepreneurship education in schools. The National Policy on Education (2013) emphasizes the incorporation of entrepreneurial skills into the curriculum to prepare students for the dynamic nature of the workforce. Furthermore, vocational and technical education has gained prominence, providing students with hands-on experiences and practical skills relevant to various industries (Ubom et al., 2018). This shift is not only apparent in policy documents but is also being actualized in educational institutions, where there is an increasing emphasis on project-based learning, internships, and industry partnerships to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

While the paradigm shift towards skills-based education in Nigeria is promising, challenges persist. There is a need for substantial investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and the development of updated curriculum materials (Ajayi, 2017). Additionally, cultural perceptions of education and societal expectations play a role in shaping the acceptance of skills-based learning. However, the potential benefits are substantial, including increased employability, entrepreneurship, and the development of a workforce capable of contributing to innovation and economic growth (Ocho, 2020). As Nigeria navigates this paradigm shift, it is crucial to address these challenges systematically to ensure the successful implementation and sustained impact of skills-based education.

### **Global best practices in education**

Education is a fundamental element for individual and societal development, and examining global best practices in education offers valuable insights for countries seeking to



enhance their educational systems. In Nigeria, there is a growing recognition of the need to benchmark against global standards to address challenges and improve overall educational outcomes. Countries like Finland have been lauded for their holistic approach, focusing on a balanced curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking and student well-being (Sahlberg, 2011). The Nigerian education system can draw inspiration from Finland's success in creating an inclusive and student-centric learning environment.

South Korea provides another noteworthy example of global best practices, particularly in the realm of teacher training and professional development. The South Korean education system places a strong emphasis on recruiting top-tier talent into the teaching profession and ensuring continuous training and support for educators (Kang, 2017). Nigeria could explore the implementation of robust teacher training programs to elevate the quality of education. Additionally, Singapore's success in incorporating technology into education is commendable. The integration of technology enhances the learning experience, preparing students for the demands of the digital era (Yuen, 2018). Nigeria can consider adapting similar strategies to foster a more technologically advanced educational landscape.

Canada is often praised for its commitment to inclusivity and diversity in education. The Canadian education system places a strong emphasis on accommodating students with diverse needs and backgrounds, fostering an inclusive learning environment (Cummins, 2019). This approach aligns with the global shift towards recognizing and addressing the diverse learning needs of students. In contrast, Germany has been lauded for its robust vocational education and training (VET) system. The German model emphasizes practical skills and apprenticeships, providing students with a clear pathway to employment (Bos et al., 2008). Nigeria could explore adopting elements of the German VET system to bridge the gap between education and industry needs, enhancing students' employability.

Furthermore, Australia's focus on student well-being and social-emotional learning is worth noting. Australian schools often incorporate programs to support students' mental health and emotional development, contributing to a positive and supportive learning environment (Durlak et al., 2011). Nigeria might consider incorporating similar initiatives to address the holistic development of students beyond academic achievements.

A comparative analysis of global best practices in education reveals a diverse array of successful strategies. While Finland, South Korea, and Singapore offer insights into student-centric approaches, teacher training, and technology integration, Canada, Germany, and Australia showcase inclusivity, vocational training, and social-emotional learning, respectively. Nigeria can draw upon these global examples to design a tailored educational framework that addresses its unique challenges and aspirations, ultimately fostering a more effective and inclusive learning environment.

### Current teacher training models

In Nigeria, current teacher training models are evolving to address the dynamic educational landscape and the need for educators to effectively prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Traditional teacher training models often focus on pedagogical methods, but contemporary approaches emphasize a more holistic and skill-oriented framework. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria highlights the importance of continuous professional development for teachers, acknowledging that "the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This recognition has led to a shift in teacher training models to incorporate not only subject matter expertise but also the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills.

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the integration of technology in teacher education programs across Nigeria. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education is





recognized as a transformative tool for effective teaching and learning. The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria has introduced initiatives such as the Teacher Professional Development Program, which incorporates technology-enhanced learning modules to equip teachers with the skills needed to integrate technology into their classrooms (Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, 2018). This reflects a departure from traditional models towards a more innovative and technology-driven approach to teacher training.

Moreover, collaboration and partnerships between teacher training institutions and schools have gained prominence in Nigeria. The collaboration ensures that teacher training is more practical and aligned with the real challenges faced in classrooms. Programs like the Teacher Professional Development Training by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) emphasize experiential learning and mentorship, fostering a supportive environment for new teachers to adapt and grow in their profession (NERDC, 2020). This shift towards collaborative models not only enhances the practical skills of teachers but also strengthens the connection between theory and classroom application.

The future of teacher education in Nigeria should involve a collaborative effort between educational institutions, government bodies, and international partners to ensure a comprehensive and globally competitive approach. Collaborative research projects, international exchange programs, and partnerships with renowned teacher education institutions can bring innovative practices to Nigeria's teacher education landscape (Okebukola, 2018). Furthermore, there should be continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to stay abreast of emerging trends and pedagogical approaches. By fostering global collaboration and embracing modern educational strategies, Nigeria can position its teacher education system at the forefront of preparing educators for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

### Proposed changes and adaptations

The Nigerian educational system has been subject to ongoing scrutiny and discussions, with stakeholders emphasizing the need for comprehensive changes and adaptations to meet the evolving demands of the 21st century. One proposed change involves a shift towards a more skill-based curriculum, aligning with global best practices. As highlighted by Akande et al. (2019), integrating critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills into the curriculum can better prepare students for the challenges of the modern world. This adaptation addresses the gap between traditional education and the skills required in the current and future job markets.

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of technology in education. Adequate integration of technology in teacher training programs and classrooms is a proposed adaptation to enhance the learning experience. As noted by Ogunlela and Adu (2020), technology integration in education is crucial for developing digital literacy and preparing students for a technology-driven future. This change involves updating infrastructure, providing teacher training in digital tools, and fostering a tech-friendly learning environment.

Another proposed change revolves around the need for continuous professional development for educators. Adequate training and support for teachers are essential for effective implementation of curriculum changes and embracing innovative teaching methods. As observed by Akinbola and Adekola (2018), continuous professional development ensures that educators stay updated on best practices, new technologies, and evolving pedagogical approaches. This adaptation contributes to a dynamic and responsive educational system in Nigeria.

### Challenges and Barriers

Achieving global best practices beyond the 21st century is confronted with numerous challenges and barriers that span economic, cultural, and educational domains. Resisting change in established educational systems poses a significant hurdle, as institutional inertia and traditional approaches may impede the adoption



of innovative practices. Limited resources, both financial and technological, can hinder the implementation of cutting-edge educational methodologies. Cultural and regional variations in educational philosophies and priorities also present challenges to global standardization. overcoming resistance to paradigm shifts in teaching methods and the need for continuous professional development for educators adds complexity.

Scholar such as Fullan (2014), Hargreaves and Shirley (2009), Zhao (2014) and UNESCO (2015) outlined the following barriers to global best practices beyond the 21st century:

1. *Quality Disparities*: Disparities in the quality of education across regions and urban-rural divides impact the overall capacity to adopt global best practices.
2. *Curriculum Relevance*: The curriculum might not be fully aligned with the evolving demands of the globalized knowledge economy, hindering the development of relevant skills.
3. *Digital Divide*: Unequal access to technology and the internet can create a digital divide, hindering the widespread adoption of modern practices.
4. *Power Supply*: Inconsistent power supply poses a challenge to implementing technology-driven best practices.
5. *Limited Resources*: Economic constraints may limit the allocation of resources to essential sectors, affecting the implementation of best practices.
6. *Investment Challenges*: Attracting foreign and domestic investments for technological advancements may face obstacles.
7. *Inconsistent Policies*: Frequent changes in policies and their inconsistent implementation can disrupt long-term planning and hinder the adoption of best practices.
8. *Corruption*: Corruption within governance structures can undermine efforts to implement and sustain global best practices.
9. *Resistance to Change*: Cultural norms and resistance to change may impede the adoption of new practices.
10. *Lack of Awareness*: Limited awareness of the benefits of global best practices may slow down their adoption.

To navigate these challenges successfully, a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach that addresses both local and global perspectives is essential. This requires commitment from governments, educational institutions, and communities to foster an environment conducive to embracing transformative educational practices.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study provides the critical importance of equipping educators with the necessary skills to meet the evolving demands of the 21st century. As our world continues to undergo rapid technological advancements and socio-economic changes, it is imperative that teacher education programs adopt global best practices to ensure educators are well-prepared to foster the development of essential skills in students. The study emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in teacher education, moving beyond traditional approaches to embrace innovative and adaptable strategies. Skill acquisition should be at the forefront of teacher training, encompassing not only subject-specific knowledge but also fostering critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy.

The study calls for a holistic approach that integrates cross-disciplinary perspectives and incorporates real-world applications to better prepare teachers for the challenges of the future. Furthermore, global collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educators, institutions, and policymakers are essential to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices. Continuous professional development must be prioritized to ensure that teachers remain agile and capable of adapting to the dynamic educational landscape. The study serves as a rallying call for stakeholders in education to prioritize skill acquisition through teacher education as a cornerstone for shaping a



future-ready generation capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions, the following are the recommendations for the study:

1. Teacher training institutes should develop and implement comprehensive teacher training programs that go beyond traditional subject knowledge and encompass the development of essential 21st-century skills.
2. The education stakeholders should promote the integration of technology in teacher education to ensure educators are proficient in leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance the learning experience and prepare students in the digital age.
3. Facilitate international collaboration among teacher education institutions, encouraging the sharing of best practices, resources, and innovative teaching methods to create a global community focused on skill acquisition.
4. The teacher training institutes should incorporate experiential learning opportunities and internships into teacher education programs, allowing future educators to gain practical experience in diverse educational settings and develop a deep understanding of real-world challenges.
5. Teacher training institutes should implement professional development programs that foster a growth mindset among teachers, encouraging them to embrace continuous learning, adaptability, and resilience in the face of evolving educational landscapes.
6. Teacher training institutes should integrate modules on diversity, equity, and inclusion within teacher education programs to prepare educators for diverse classrooms. This includes training on culturally responsive teaching strategies and creating inclusive learning environments.
7. Teacher training institutes should also prioritize the inclusion of social and emotional learning components in teacher education, equipping educators with the skills to address the socio-emotional needs of students,

fostering a positive and supportive classroom environment.

8. Teacher training institutes should develop effective assessment and feedback systems within teacher education programs that focus not only on traditional academic measures but also on evaluating the acquisition of essential skills. Encourage reflective practices for ongoing professional development.
9. Teacher training institutes should advocate for policy changes at national and international levels that recognize the importance of skill acquisition in education. Encourage the alignment of educational policies with the goal of producing globally competitive, skill-ready graduates.
10. Teacher training institutes should support ongoing research in the field of teacher education, focusing on the identification of emerging skills required in the 21st century. Use research findings to continually improve teacher education programs and stay ahead of evolving educational needs.

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