

## Utilization of Educational Resource Centres (ERC) for Effective Teacher Education in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Over the years, the traditional role of a teacher as a primary custodian of knowledge has changed to the teacher being a facilitator of learning, which requires the effective use of educational resources in the teaching-learning process. ERCs as veritable means for enhancing the provision of vicarious learning experiences to the learners should be properly coordinated so as to enliven and ameliorate the teaching-learning environment. This paper highlights the concept of ERC and its place in teacher education, it suggests that ERC should be established, easily accessible and integrated in the teaching-learning processes. Generally, the paper is premised on the fact that qualitative teacher education results in qualitative educational system, and vice versa. Therefore, it is opined that effective utilization of an organized and coordinated ERC will bring about improvements in curriculum activities; enliven the teaching-learning process; enhance teachers' performance and concomitant improvement in the quantity and quality of learning.*

**Keywords:** Educational Resource Centres, Teacher Education, Utilization.

### Introduction

A wide range of educational resources to be used in the teaching-learning process exist. With the rapid explosion in knowledge, the need for meaningful utilization of these arrays of educational resources in the educational system has assumed greater importance. The government of the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (NPE) had mandated the establishment of different types of Educational Resource Centres (ERC) at different operational levels (FRN, 2014). Apparently the establishment of the ERC was aimed at enhancing the accessibility, effective coordination and usage of educational resources among other cardinal objectives. The National Policy on Education (NPE) had envisaged that the establishment of ERC among other facilities was instrumental and germane to the implementation of educational policy and the anticipated attainment of the goals of the educational policy as well as the promotion of the effectiveness of the educational system of the country. The National policy document in section 8 relating to educational support services had noted the place of ERC in the attainment of the goals of educational support services which were to:

a. Develop, access and improve educational programmes;

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- b.Enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers;
- c.Provide conducive environment for learning;
- d.Make learning experiences more meaningful and reliable for children;
- e.Make education more cost effective;
- f.Promote in-service education;
- g.Enhance access to learning;
- h.Develop and promote effective use of innovative materials in schools; and
- i.Promote partnership with Non-Governmental organizations (NGO) and International Development Partners (IDPs) to access resources (FGN, 2014).

To give impetus to the implementation of the provisions of the national education policy, the National Educational Technology Centre (NETC) Kaduna was established in 1977. Its emergence in the Nigerian educational system complimented the pioneering roles of tertiary education institutions in propagating and integrating the principles of Educational Technology and related innovative strategies in the teaching-learning process in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Educational Resources Centres**

ERC cannot exist without educational resources by educational resources is meant the broad spectrum of educational- human and non-human –resources that are used in a bid to enhance meaningful teaching and learning. These educational resources are also called educational media, instructional media, instructional materials, learning resources, teaching aids, curriculum materials among other nomenclatures (Amah, 2016). Smaldino, et al., (2008) used media instead of resources to refer to the channels through which information is transmitted from a source to a receiver. Thus educational media are simply carriers of information. In a similar vein, the Association for Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) as cited by Amah (2016) defined educational media as self-supporting devices that can be used to present a complete body of information to learners in the teaching-learning process. Educational resources as self-supporting devices point to the fact that they can be utilized with or without the presence of a teacher. Nonetheless, the place of a teacher in the effective utilization of educational resources in the teaching and learning process cannot be emphasized. The teachers themselves fall within the arm-bit of educational resources, and are instrumental in the effective harnessing of other educational resources for a meaningful teaching and learning experience.

Educational resources – audio materials, visual aids, audio-visual media, printed materials, projected media, non-projected media and humans – are in themselves of little or no use in the educational system unless they can facilitate the attainment of curriculum objectives. Hence, the need for the availability, accessibility and utilization of the educational resources centres in the teaching-learning process becomes paramount and cannot be overemphasized. This further brings to the fore the place of ERC in the teaching learning process.

### **What are Educational Resource Centres ERC ?**

ERC like educational resources have been variedly labeled depending on the preferences of the authorities that establish them. The names/labels include Learning Resource Centre (LRC); Instructional Media Centre; Audio-Visual Aids Centre; Educational Media Centre; Instructional Resources Centre; Teachers Resources Centre; and Centre for Educational Technology (CET) among others. ERC are defined primarily in terms of their functions. Thus, Davies as cited in Osere (1998) sees an ERC as a service-bureau used by both staff and students, for either independent or group work, to enhance teaching and learning processes. As a service bureau, an ERC provides services for individualized and group instruction. It is a place for the design, development, storage and

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distribution of sundry teaching learning materials aimed at enhancing learning. Tucker as cited in Ekanem (2015) used ERC in reference to an organization that facilitates the design, production, collection, dissemination and delivery of educational materials to students, teachers and others involved in education. Evidently, the provision of educational services in form of media is central to ERC. Thus an ERC should have enough space in the building for independent or group study by the learners. It should also have multi-media facilities (hard-wares and soft-wares) to cater for individual differences among the learners. It will be stating the obvious that an ERC should have adequate retinue of staff to coordinate the usage of the centre in meaningful teaching and learning activities. It cannot be gainsaid that a functional ERC of whatever nomenclature should have a coordinated storage, retrieval and distribution system that will enhance easy accessibility and utilization of educational resources when needed by clients (staff, learners and others) respectively.

### **Teacher Education and Education Resource Centres**

Different authors and scholars present teacher education from sundry perspectives. According to Izuagba and Obiefuna (2013), teacher education is a formal and systematic process of professional preparation given to potential teachers for the task ahead on the one hand, and the programmes specifically designed to assist persons already in the teaching profession to keep abreast with developments in the profession, thus the idea of pre-service and in-service teacher education. Invariably, the essence of teacher education is to equip teachers and put them in better stead for the effective discharge of their duties. Nwokocha as cited in Duru (2016) referred to teacher education as a process aimed at providing prospective teachers opportunities for the development of cognitive perspective, affective dispositions and psychomotor competencies in a bid to enhance their qualities and capacities for teaching throughout their careers as teachers. Teacher education is thus generic and very encompassing in nature. Teacher education is the bedrock of any good educational system. The National Policy on Education (NPE) aptly stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2014). The quality of teacher education determines the quality of teachers, which also affects the quality of students produced (Agwu & Ogbonnaya-Iduma, 2016). Every programme of teacher education takes place in approved and designated teacher education institution, with requisite curriculum duly approved and prescribed by the relevant agencies in-charge of teacher education - the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Universities Commission (NUC) for University education among others. The curriculum or teacher education is made up of foundation courses in education, general studies, methodology courses and courses relating to the teachers area of specialization. Evidently, micro teaching (theory and practicum) as well as teaching practice occupy a place of pride in teacher education curriculum. According to Dienne (2005), teacher education is justifiably included in the National Policy on education primarily because it is an integral part of any educational policy; teachers by virtue of their roles are the cornerstones in the realization of the educational objectives and goals of the country; the quality of teachers determine the quality of education; and teachers are indispensable in the implementation of the policy.

According to the National Policy on Education (NPE); the goals of teacher education include inter-alia the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers; encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; and providing teachers with requisite intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment (FRN, 2014). Okoroma (2010) had alluded to these when he noted that teacher education is expected to produce teachers who are flexible, dependable, enthusiastic, refined and resourceful among others. Teachers' creativity and resourcefulness are brought to the fore via meaningful utilization of educational resources in the teaching and learning process. Invariably, improvements can be brought into teacher education via the provision of educational resources, and more importantly the effective

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coordination, storage, retrieval and utilization of these resources in teaching and learning. Doubtless, this can be facilitated via the availability and usage of ERC. It is apparent that the rate of knowledge explosion and emergence of educational innovation and the availability of plethora of educational resources underlines the need for the establishment of ERC. According to Osere (1998), the establishment of ERC is at the apex of the requirements for integrating Educational Technology into educational programmes. In fact, ERC are said to be the hub on which the implementation of educational technology revolve. Basically, the purpose of ERC is to enrich the learning experiences of learners and teachers in the educational process; and ultimately ensure that learners benefit from the learning resources (Osaronwi as cited in Ekanem, 2015)

Specifically the functions performed by ERC as enumerated by Ezeriba, et al., (2017) include:

- Procurement and presentation of educational materials.
- Loaning of educational materials and equipment to schools and teachers.
- Acquisition of relevant educational materials.
- Maintenance and repair of learning equipment/materials.
- Organizing seminars, workshop, and conferences on issues of educational importance.
- Provision of conducive environment for learning to teachers and students.
- Enhancement of the implementation of educational innovations.

Similar views about the functions of ERC had been expressed by Osere (1998) and Wali (2003) to include:

- i. Provision of multimedia and information technology resources;
- ii. Providing data sources, space and technological equipments to facilitate learning;
- iii. Providing individual study carrels and large areas for group studies;
- iv. Storing and making available a wide range of educational resources for use by students, teachers and other clients;
- v. Assisting students and other clients to produce and process low cost instructional materials especially charts, transparencies, photographs, films and cassettes;
- vi. Providing training to both undergraduates and teachers on the effective use of audio-visual in teaching and learning processes;
- vii. Scheduling and organizing microteaching practicum exercises/presentations by undergraduates/teacher-trainees;
- viii. Providing easy access to a wide range of non-book materials for use by clients especially students;
- ix. Repairing, servicing and maintenance of educational resources, as well as offering technical services in the production, distribution and installation of equipment in places where needed;
- x. Helping teachers and students to acquire professional skills in the production and utilization of educational materials;
- xi. Providing professional educational consultancy services and research assistance to proximate clients (students, teachers) and other institutions;
- xii. Rendering assistance in the coordination and coverage of staff professional development programmes (seminar, workshops and conferences).

### **Using Educational Resource Centres to Improve Teacher Education**

ERC have the potentialities of ameliorating teacher education in Nigeria. Okeke (2019) asserts that the required materials needed by teachers to get desired information are in ERC, thus ERC are key to teachers success in Nigeria. In the Nigerian educational system, the NCCE documents (NCCE, 2012) accords a pride of place to

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micro teaching practicum. The micro teaching practicum usually take place in the micro teaching laboratories housed in the ERC of the tertiary educational institutions. During the micro teaching practicum exercises, the students could borrow relevant instructional materials from the stock available or stored in the ERC. Similar services could also be extended to the students when they proceed on teaching practice exercise. The adoption and diffusion of educational technology and the infusion of resourcefulness by teachers in the teaching – learning process is without doubt dependent on the quality of teacher preparation offered by teacher education institutions. The leading roles of tertiary educational institutions as frontline proponents of educational technology principles and related issues, were acknowledged in Osere (1998) who observed that colleges of education were more organized in the application of educational technology principles in the instructional process than universities. Imogie, et al., as cited in Osere (1998) the major contributions of tertiary educational institutions to educational technology to include:

- Provision of audio-visual aids loans services to the lower echelons of schools;
- Rendering of services relating to the production and use of instructional resources to staff and students of the institutions and surrounding post primary schools;
- Publication of educational materials including journals;
- Organizing in-service and pre-service training programmes on audio-visual communications for teachers;
- Integration of educational technology elements into teacher education programme, especially through the use of micro teaching laboratory (Osere, 1998).

The provision of diverse educational resources and effective utilization of same to provide vicarious learning experiences to the learners might be a mirage, if educational resources are not meaningfully integrated into the teaching-learning processes of the teacher education institutions.

Okworo and Adie (2017) opined that the challenges confronting distance education can be ameliorated if ERC are incorporated into the operational and institutional framework of Distance Education (DE). The recent Covid-19 scourge which led to the lockdown and disruption of academic programmes of schools globally brings to the fore, the need to not only establish ERC but make functional their existence. In the peak of the Covid-19 lockdown, the emphasis was on e-learning as alternative to conventional method. Functional ERC in ideal settings would have assuaged the challenges by facilitating the transmission of e-learning to the learners without physical contacts.

### **Major Constraints of Educational Resource Centres**

The major challenges confronting ERC in Nigeria were discussed by Adewoyin and Ibe-Bassey as cited in Osere (1998) under two broad factors; institutional and attitudinal problems respectively. A careful consideration of these broad factors indicates that the institutional problems dovetail around inadequate funding, inadequate space for clients usage; lack of proper storage and maintenance of available media resources and dearth of academic and professionally trained educational media personnel. In fact the lack of quality professional staff in an ERC is evidenced in the preponderance of such personnel as technicians, photographers and production assistants, thereby making the resource centres to render more of such services as issuance of microphones, projectors, video coverage of micro teaching sessions and occasions within the institutions and preparation of staff and students identity cards when need be.

The attitudinal constraints are

- i.lack of basic knowledge in the use of innovative teaching resources like computer, interactive chalkboard, PowerPoint presentation etc.,
- ii.resistance to change by teachers.

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Ekanem (2015); Nwafor and Ilorah (2006); Ezernba, et al. (2017); Okworo and Adie (2017) all inferred that teacher's lack adequate knowledge of the objectives of ERC. The negative attitude of teachers, staff and other users of the centres are exacerbated by the seeming ICT phobia evidenced in shallow literacy in computer usage for lessons delivery. It is not unusual to see many teachers and students of teacher education institutions claim ignorance of the existence of any other ERC aside from the library. If individuals are not aware of the physical existence of any such resource centres, their knowledge of the services rendered or actual usage of the centres can be better imagined. In most instances, these staff and students merely know that such centres are places where students go for micro teaching practicum only. These constraints no doubt affect the effectiveness of the ERC and the consequent attainment of the objectives for establishing them.

### **Recommendations**

These recommendations are made with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of educational resource centers (ERC) in teacher in education. They are;

- 1.The statutory provision for the establishment of ERC at all levels of education should be enforced. The relevant government agencies should ensure that this policy directive is carried out.
- 2.There should be adequate staffing of the existing ERC. The staff of the centres should be sponsored to workshops for further training updated to gain hands on experience.
- 3.The need for the existing ERC to be stocked with a wide and balanced range of educational resources cannot be overemphasized. There should be the institutionalization of the use of ERC in the educational programmes of the institutions. Staff and students should have a conviction and attitudinal re-orientation on the need for this paradigm shift, the incorporation of ERCs into the teaching and learning process. The ERC should be used in teaching some courses such as educational technology, theory and practicum, principles and methods of teaching, special methodology courses among others
- 4.The existing ERCs should publicize their existence/activities to the public, beginning with the immediate members of the school's community. Exhibitions could come in handy in this vein.
- 5.The ERCs should be up and doing in the areas of design and production of low-cost instructional materials. The staff and students of various schools and facilities in the ERC should be encouraged to integrate improvisation of instructional materials into college-wide and departmental methodology courses. This will not only succeed in equipping the centres but help to improve the creative skills of the staff of the centre. Invariably, local design and production of instructional materials – charts, banners, slides transparencies, audio recording et cetera – cannot be carried out without spacious production/storage halls hence, the need for a well spaced ERCs which is incorporated in proper funding of the centres.

### **Conclusion**

ERC of varied nomenclature do exist in the tertiary institutions, particularly those engaged in the professional preparation of teachers. What one may not vouch-safe is their functionality and meaningful integration into teaching – learning process of the institutions. Functional ERC in teacher education will promote the use of educational resources in the teaching learning process; enliven the classrooms; enhance the improvisation of instructional materials; provide variable alternatives to field trips; promote innovative practices in curriculum implementation; enhance the facilitative roles of the teacher and encourage the development of e-learning strategies. The potential usefulness of ERCs in teacher education and general amelioration of the teaching and learning environment cannot be over-emphasized. The use of ERCs in the teaching process should be institutionalized.

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