

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

JAMILA SHU'ARA

Department of Business Management and Marketing,
Baze University Abuja
Jamila.shuara@baseuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

This study reimagined the future of teacher education in Nigeria by examining the transformative role of Colleges of Education (CoEs) in producing competent, values-driven, and future-ready teachers capable of supporting national development. These data were analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. The study focuses on four interrelated dimensions of transformation: technology and innovation, pedagogy and curriculum reform, equity and inclusion, and sustainability and societal relevance. The findings indicated that while CoEs occupy a strategic position in shaping Nigeria's teaching workforce, their transformative potential remains constrained by persistent challenges such as chronic underfunding, weak integration of information and communication technologies (ICT), theory-dominated curricula, limited professional development opportunities for lecturers, and inconsistent policy implementation. The study concluded that repositioning Colleges of Education as hubs of innovation, values education, and social responsiveness is essential for achieving quality, inclusive, and sustainable education in Nigeria. It therefore recommended sustained investment in teacher education, comprehensive curriculum and pedagogical reforms, strengthened professional development systems, robust data management frameworks, and deeper engagement with communities and policy actors. These measures are critical to enabling CoEs to function effectively as engines of educational transformation and drivers of national development.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Curriculum Reform, Digital Learning, Educational Transformation, Sustainable Development, Teacher Education

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is widely regarded as a cornerstone for National Development, social progress, and human capital formation. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to function productively within society and contribute meaningfully to economic growth (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2022). Structurally, Nigeria's education system spans early childhood education, primary education, junior and senior secondary education, and tertiary education, which includes universities, polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. Although notable progress has been made in improving access, curriculum relevance, and enrolment levels, the sector continues to grapple with persistent challenges such as poor infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, regional inequalities, and weak policy implementation (Okebukola, 2021; Yusuf, 2025). Government initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme have sought to guarantee free and compulsory basic education, while curriculum reforms have increasingly emphasized science, technology, and vocational skills to align education with contemporary societal needs.

Teacher education occupies a central position in the development of a functional and responsive education system in Nigeria. Colleges of Education, which are primarily responsible for training teachers for basic and junior secondary education, play a crucial role in shaping the quality of teaching

and learning nationwide. However, despite their importance, these institutions face enduring challenges including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortages of qualified academic staff, and inconsistent adherence to national standards. These limitations significantly weaken their capacity to produce competent and confident teachers (Terhemba, et. al., 2021; Aina & Akintunde, 2022). While teacher education systems globally have evolved to embrace digital literacy, learner-centred pedagogy, and inclusive instructional practices, Nigeria's Colleges of Education have struggled to keep pace due to structural weaknesses and limited reform capacity (Cherechi, 2018; Yusuf, 2025). Consequently, the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities continues to widen, with adverse implications for educational quality. In recent years, concerns about the quality, relevance, and attractiveness of teacher education programmes in Nigeria have intensified. Weak professional development opportunities for lecturers, coupled with limited integration of modern pedagogical tools such as ICT, further undermine the effectiveness of teacher preparation (Cherechi, 2018). Without comprehensive and systemic reforms, Colleges of Education risk continuing to produce graduates who are ill-equipped to handle the complexities of modern classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

Nevertheless, Colleges of Education possess significant potential to serve as transformative centres for innovation in teacher preparation. They tend to be confronted with several challenges and problems such as adequate and sustainable funding by government at all levels, absence of enabling environments for effective pedagogy, absence of well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and digital infrastructure are indispensable for the production of quality teachers. Other problems include absence of value-based teacher education, absence of values such as accountability, integrity, equity, inclusion, social responsibility, and sustainability. While lack of credible Teacher Education Management Information System (TEMIS), reliable and integrated data banks on students, untrained staff, poor infrastructure, and staled academic programmes also poses serious problem to CoE management.

By strengthening curriculum relevance and embedding contemporary pedagogical practices, these institutions can better align teacher training with real classroom demands. Research indicates that sustained professional learning opportunities such as professional learning communities, collaborative practices, and strong partnerships between colleges and schools enhance teaching capacity and improve learning outcomes (Adedoyin & Bello, 2025). Transforming Colleges of Education, therefore, represents not only a response to existing challenges but also a strategic pathway to improving educational outcomes nationwide. Effective partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools help bridge the theory practice gap, strengthen accountability, and ensure that teacher preparation responds to contextual realities (Bouwoye & Adesokan, 2024). With targeted policy support and sustained investment, teacher education can be repositioned to elevate the teaching profession and improve standards across Nigeria's basic and secondary education sectors.

Although existing studies have extensively documented the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to how Colleges of Education can be strategically repositioned as transformative institutions capable of producing future-ready teachers. Much of the literature focuses on deficiencies in resources, curriculum, and infrastructure, with less emphasis on innovative institutional practices, pedagogical modernization, and integrated policy interventions (Yusuf, 2025; Aina & Akintunde, 2022).

Literature Review

Teacher education is widely understood as a comprehensive and dynamic process aimed at preparing individuals for effective teaching and professional practice. Scholars and international organisations

have offered diverse perspectives that highlight its depth and importance. According to Adeyemi (2020), teacher education involves the systematic preparation of individuals through a combination of theoretical instruction and practical experiences, ensuring that teachers can perform their roles effectively while contributing to the broader development of the education system. Similarly, Akpan (2019) describes teacher education as encompassing both formal and informal processes that equip teachers with pedagogical knowledge, professional skills, and ethical values necessary to improve teaching and learning outcomes, thereby stressing the need for continuous professional development. Transformative education is increasingly viewed as a lifelong process that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge to promote the holistic development of learners. It focuses on nurturing cognitive, ethical, and socio-emotional capacities essential for meaningful participation in society. UNESCO (2025) describes transformative education as a continuous process that fosters knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, empathy, and sustainable behaviours necessary for building inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

Supporting this perspective, Megawati and Prahmana (2025) highlight the moral and ethical dimensions of transformative education, noting that it develops learners' social awareness and sense of agency, enabling them to address complex challenges of the 21st century and contribute positively to social change. Colleges of Education play a central role in the preparation of teachers for Nigeria's basic education system. These institutions are widely recognised for their responsibility in developing qualified and competent educators. Akpan and Effiom (2021) explain that Colleges of Education are established to equip prospective teachers with the professional skills, ethical values, and subject knowledge required for effective classroom teaching. In line with this, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2020) defines them as tertiary institutions primarily responsible for training teachers for primary and junior secondary schools through both pre-service and in-service programmes that blend theoretical learning with practical teaching experiences.

Aworinde (2025) carried out an empirical study on the relevance of e-learning in Business Education programmes in Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria. The study sought to examine how e-learning tools contribute to effective teaching and learning. In this study, the relevance of e-learning served as the dependent variable and was measured through the use of word processing tools and web-based resources, while ICT availability and pedagogical integration were treated as independent variables. Data were collected from NCE Business Education students using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that e-learning was moderately utilized, with major challenges including inadequate ICT resources and limited access to the internet. Based on these findings, the study recommended the improvement of ICT infrastructure, continuous professional development for lecturers in e-pedagogy, and curriculum reforms that deliberately embed e-learning strategies. However, the study identified a research gap in the lack of empirical evidence linking e-learning utilization to graduates' outcomes and employability.

Olayiwola and Alimi (2025) examined the level of preparedness of Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria for blended learning, with particular attention to infrastructural readiness and institutional capacity for technology-enhanced instruction. The study adopted a survey research design and involved 1,059 students and 168 lecturers drawn from three colleges. Blended learning preparedness, measured by the availability of ICT facilities and institutional support, was the dependent variable, while infrastructure readiness served as the independent variable. Data were gathered using standardized questionnaires and institutional checklists and analysed descriptively. The results indicated that the colleges were largely unprepared for blended learning, as ICT infrastructure fell below the minimum standards prescribed by federal authorities. Consequently, the study

recommended increased investment in ICT facilities, capacity-building programmes for lecturers, and the formulation of supportive policies for technology integration.

This study is anchored on the transformative learning theory which also serves as the underpinning theory. Transformative Learning Theory was developed by Jack Mezirow in the early 1990s. According to Mezirow (1991), adult learning is not limited to the passive acquisition of knowledge but involves critical reflection through which individuals question deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and habitual ways of thinking. This reflective process leads to significant and lasting changes in perspectives and behaviour. Within the context of Nigerian Colleges of Education, Transformative Learning Theory is particularly relevant because it presents teacher education as a dynamic and reflective process rather than a purely content-driven exercise. The theory emphasizes the preparation of teachers who are reflective, adaptable, and capable of critical thinking qualities that are essential for addressing the complex demands of twenty-first-century classrooms. By adopting teaching strategies that promote experiential learning, reflective practice, and problem-solving, Colleges of Education can significantly enhance the professional competence of teachers.

Methodology

This study employed a historical research design, which is well suited for examining the development, evolution, and transformative role of Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Historical research focuses on the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of past events, policies, and practices in order to understand present realities and inform future reforms (Best & Kahn, 2016). The choice of this design is justified by the need to trace the origins and progression of teacher education policies, institutional reforms, curriculum developments, and the wider socio-political context influencing Colleges of Education from their inception to the present day. To ensure thorough data interpretation, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were adopted, allowing for detailed examination of textual materials and the identification of recurring patterns and themes. The study relied solely on secondary data sources, in line with the requirements of historical research. These sources included government documents such as National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) accreditation reports, policy frameworks from the Federal Ministry of Education, and official educational white papers. Data collection was carried out through a comprehensive documentary review and organized using a structured data extraction matrix to ensure consistency and systematic analysis.

Content and Thematic Analysis

The Transformative Role of CoEs in Reimagining the Future of Education in Nigeria
Colleges of Education (CoEs) play a role that goes far beyond equipping student-teachers with pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge. They are also responsible for instilling the values of innovation, inclusivity, and adaptability required to function effectively in globally competitive classrooms. Under the supervision of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), CoEs are mandated to train future educators who directly influence learning outcomes at the basic education level the very foundation of Nigeria's entire education system. As such, CoEs serve as both agents and catalysts of educational transformation, shaping how the country responds to demographic pressures, advances the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG 4), and builds a globally competitive knowledge economy (UNESCO, 2021; FRN, 2014; World Bank, 2022).

a. Technology and Innovation in Education

CoEs must leverage technology and innovation to reimagine education in Nigeria by integrating digital tools into teacher preparation and classroom practice. This approach aligns with global calls for digital transformation in education (UNESCO, 2021a) and Nigeria's National Digital Economy Policy (FRN, 2020), while also addressing pressing challenges such as teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms,

and unequal distribution of educational resources. The use of e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and open educational resources (OER) enables teacher educators to demonstrate how digital pedagogy can expand access to quality education, particularly in underserved rural communities.

b. Pedagogy and Curriculum Transformation

Pedagogical renewal and curriculum transformation are equally vital to reimagining Nigeria’s education system as highlighted in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Traditional vs. Transformed Approaches in Pedagogy and Curriculum

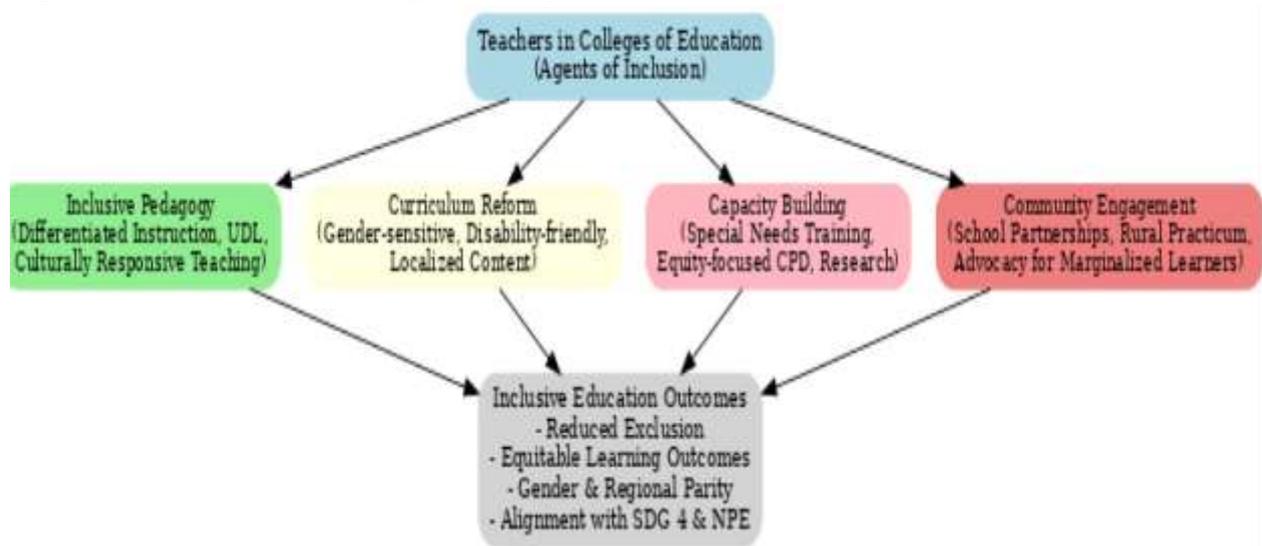
S/N	Dimensions	What is Traditional Pedagogy & Curriculum	Transformative Contents/Curriculum
	Teaching Approach	Teacher-centred (lecture, rote memorisation)	Learner-centred (active, participatory, inquiry-based)
2.	Learning Focus	Knowledge transmission and recall	Critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity
3.	Curriculum Orientation	Fixed, subject-siloed, exam-driven	Flexible, interdisciplinary, skills- and values-driven
4.	Assessment	Summative, high-stakes exams	Continuous, formative, competency-based
5.	Inclusivity	Limited attention to diverse learners	Inclusive practices (special needs, gender, rural/urban equity)
6.	Use of Context	Generic, detached from real life	Locally relevant, linked to societal challenges (e.g., climate, health, citizenship)

Source: Field Study (2025).

Equity and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion must serve as central pillars in reimagining education in Nigeria, with teachers and Colleges of Education (CoEs) playing a decisive role in preparing future educators to create learning environments as shown in Fig 1 below:

Fig 1: Teachers in CoEs Are Agents of Equity and Inclusion



Source: Field Study (2025).

c. Sustainability and Societal Relevance

Colleges of Education (CoEs) occupy a strategic position in embedding sustainability and societal relevance within Nigeria’s education system as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Traditional vs. Sustainability Driven Education Approaches for CoEs

S/N	Dimension	Traditional Approaches	Education Sustainability & Societal Relevance Approaches
1.	Curriculum Focus	Emphasis on rote learning and theoretical knowledge	Integration of sustainability themes.
2.	Teaching Methods	Teacher-centered, lecture.	Learner-centered, participatory, project.
3.	Relevance to Society	Limited alignment with local realities.	Strong alignment with Nigeria's socio-economic priorities.
4.	Skills Development	Focus on memorization and examinations	Development of critical thinking, creativity, entrepreneurship.

Source: Field Study (2025).

d. CoEs Must Prioritize Values Education

Teachers and the tenets of the teaching profession are hinged on values. The heightened levels of corruption and decadence in Nigerian society are a direct fallout of the absence or failure of value education. Values must remain central to the future of education for Nigeria because they are the platform on which to nurture responsible, ethical, and civic-minded citizens who can drive national development. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) highlights the inculcation of moral and spiritual values, respect for the dignity of the individual, and shared responsibility for the common good as fundamental aims. This underscores the importance of embedding values into the curriculum to shape learners beyond academic knowledge (FRN, 2014).

Conclusion

CoEs and teachers are pivotal to reimagining the future of teacher education in Nigeria because they serve as the foundation-builders of the teaching profession, and shape the mindset, skills, and values of future educators and professional. By focusing on values education, technology and innovation, transforming pedagogy and curriculum, promoting equity and inclusion, and embedding sustainability and societal relevance, CoEs will prepare teachers and citizens who are not only effective in the classroom but also responsive to Nigeria's broader developmental needs.

Suggestions for Future Improvement on CoE Learning in Nigeria

Going by the challenges and problems highlighted above, the study recommends as follows:

- i. Adequate and sustainable funding must be prioritised by government at all levels. Enabling environments for effective pedagogy; such as well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and digital infrastructure are indispensable for the production of quality teachers.
- ii. Values-based teacher education should be strengthened. CoEs and teacher educators must intentionally promote values such as accountability, integrity, equity, inclusion, social responsibility, and sustainability.
- iii. There is a need to develop a credible Teacher Education Management Information System (TEMIS). Teacher education agencies such as the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Teachers' Institute (NTI), and CoEs should maintain reliable and integrated data banks on students, staff, infrastructure, and academic programmes.
- iv. Technology and innovation must be systematically harnessed in teacher education. The integration of digital tools, e-learning platforms, and artificial intelligence-assisted instructional technologies should become a core component of teacher preparation.
- v. Pedagogy and curriculum must be transformed to align with contemporary educational needs while Teacher education should move away from rote learning and examination-driven instruction towards learner-centred, inquiry-based, and problem-solving approaches
- .vi. Equity and inclusion should be mainstreamed in teacher education. CoEs must adopt inclusive

pedagogical practices that address gender disparities, disabilities, socio-economic inequalities, and rural–urban divides.

vii. Sustainability and societal relevance should guide teacher preparation. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) should be integrated into all teacher education programmes, while curricula should be aligned with Nigeria’s broader development priorities.

viii. Professional development and research capacity within CoEs must be strengthened. Continuous professional development (CPD) for teacher educators should be supported through funding, training, and partnerships.

References

- Adebagbo, A. A., & Adewoye, O. O. (2024). Lecturers’ awareness and utilisation of information and communication technology for instructional delivery in Nigerian higher education institutions. *Journal of Educational Technology and Teacher Education*, 18(2), 45–60.
- Adedoyin, O. B., & Bello, S. A. (2025). Professional learning communities and teaching effectiveness in Nigerian teacher education institutions. *African Journal of Teacher Education*, 14(1), 1–18.
- Adeyemi, K. (2019). Teacher preparation and professional development in Nigerian colleges of education. *Journal of Teacher Education and Development*, 12(1), 23–37.
- Adeyemi, K. (2020). Teacher education and professional competence in developing education systems. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 9(3), 112–124.
- Aina, J. K., & Abdulrahman, A. O. (2022). Lecturers’ perceptions of the quality of teacher education in Nigerian colleges of education. *Journal of Educational Policy and Practice*, 7(2), 89–105.
- Akpan, E. A. (2019). Teacher education and professional development in Africa. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 11(2), 45–61.
- Akpan, E. A., & Effiom, P. O. (2021). Teacher preparation and professionalism in Nigerian colleges of education. *Nigerian Journal of Teacher Education*, 19(1), 32–49.
- Arbeiter, S., & Bucar, M. (2020). Transformative learning for sustainable development. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 14(2), 89–104.
- Aworinde, T. O. (2025). Relevance of e-learning in business education programmes in colleges of education in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Business and Vocational Education*, 10(1), 55–72.
- Best, J. W., & Kahn, J. V. (2016). *Research in Education* (10th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Bouwoye, O., & Adesokan, A. (2024). School–college partnerships and teacher effectiveness in Nigeria. *Journal of Teacher Education and Practice*, 8(1), 1–15.
- Buba, A., & Bayero, U. (2021). Effect of blended learning on NCE students’ achievement in Social Studies. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), 101–118.
- Cherechi, S. (2018). ICT integration and teacher education in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 6(1), 22–37.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2020). *National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020–2030)*. Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National Policy on Education* (6th ed.). NERDC Press.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2022). *Education Sector Status Report*. Abuja: Author.
- Megawati, R., & Prahmana, R. C. I. (2025). Transformative education and moral development. *International Journal of Education and Ethics*, 7(1), 12–29.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- National Commission for Colleges of Education (2025). *Accreditation and Quality Assurance Guidelines for Colleges of Education*. Abuja: NCCE
- National Commission for Colleges of Education (2020). *Minimum Standards for Nigeria Certificate*

- in Education (NCE). Abuja: NCCE.
- Nwoke, B. I. (2014). Effects of blended e-learning on pre-service teachers' achievement in mathematics. *Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 9(1), 45–59.
- Olayiwola, A. O., & Alimi, S. O. (2025). Preparedness of colleges of education for blended learning in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Technology and Innovation*, 11(2), 66–85.
- Olorundare, A. S. (2018). Teacher education and professionalism in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Studies*, 14(1), 21–38.
- Okebukola, P. (2021). Repositioning Nigerian education for national development. *Journal of Education Policy and Reform*, 5(2), 1–15.
- Terhemba, S. A., Okoye, M. O., & Ibrahim, L. (2021). Infrastructure and teacher education quality in Nigerian colleges of education. *African Journal of Educational Development*, 13(2), 78–96.
- UNESCO (2025). *Transformative Learning and Global Citizenship*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO (2024). *Transformative Education for Sustainable Futures*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO (2023). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO (2021). *Reimagining our Futures Together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO (2016). *Teacher Education and Development: Global Perspectives*. UNESCO Publishing.
- World Bank. (2022). *Improving Learning Outcomes in Developing Countries*. World Bank Publications.
- World Bank. (2023b). *Public Expenditure Review on Education in Nigeria*. World Bank Group.
- Yunusa, A., & Zumunta, R. (2020). Pre-service teachers' readiness for ICT integration in Basic Science teaching. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 8(2), 45–61.
- Yusuf, A. (2025). Teacher education reform and national development in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Policy Studies*, 12(1), 1–20.