

FUTUROLOGY OF TEACHING AND EDUCATORS IN NIGERIA: EMERGING TRENDS AND MODERNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

¹Abbas A. Muhammad Ph.D.; ²Ahmed Sharu Khalid & ³Usman Yusuf Ph.D.

¹General Studies Education (GSE) Department,
Faculty of Education,
Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal University of Education, Kano
abbasfagge@gmail.com
+2348055272027

²General Studies Education Department,
Faculty of Education,
Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal College of Education, Kano
askhalid@gmail.com
+2348036765712

³Educational Foundation Department,
Faculty of Education,
Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal University of Education, Kano
usman.yusuf19@yahoo.com
+2348032921327

Abstract

The teaching profession in Nigeria is currently confronted with declining interest, reduced societal prestige, and a shortage of qualified educators. This situation has been exacerbated by inadequate policy attention, poor remuneration, and the migration of experienced teachers to more attractive professions. Despite these challenges, the demand for competent educators continues to grow in response to increasing student enrolment across all levels of education. This paper examines the future of teaching and educators in Nigeria within the context of 21st-century realities. It explores emerging trends such as digital pedagogy, innovative teaching methodologies, and the integration of technology in education. The study also reviews the historical evolution of teaching in Nigeria and analyses the factors contributing to its current state of decline. Furthermore, the paper highlights the implications of neglecting the teaching profession, including declining enrolment in education programmes, proliferation of substandard teacher training institutions, and the erosion of professional standards. It argues that repositioning teaching for future relevance requires strategic reforms focused on professional development, improved welfare, policy support, and the adoption of modern educational practices. The paper concludes by proposing practical strategies to enhance the status, attractiveness, and effectiveness of educators in Nigeria, ensuring that the profession is well-equipped to meet the demands of the 21st-century knowledge economy.

Keywords: teaching, educators, futurology, educational trends, teacher development, Nigeria

Introduction

Before the 20th century, teaching was considered an art or craft, teachers were usually young and untrained, and only university professors and a few elite secondary school teachers were regarded as professionals. Teaching has become legally established in Nigeria through the enactment of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act 31 of 1993 (TRCN, 2023). But nothing has changed for the better. The prestige accorded to teaching and educators in the society is reducing considerably and this has led to loss of interest and attraction to the teaching profession, even among educators themselves. Given these challenges and global efforts to improve teaching through technology integration, pedagogical shifts, and structural and policy trends etc., the questions waiting to be answered are: what will teaching look like in Nigeria by 2030 or 2050 and how will technology reshape educators' role in Nigeria? This paper defines the concepts of teaching and educators while it also discusses the historical evolution of teaching in Nigeria, the current challenges facing the teaching profession, emerging trends in teaching, and the futurology of educators among others.

Concept of Teaching and Educators

What is teaching?

Marzano in Muhammad (2025) defines teaching as an act or process of sharing knowledge and skills with a learner or audience in an educational setting. It involves creating a conducive environment where learners can learn and grow. Teaching can be considered as an art and also as a science as further elaborated below:

As art: Teachers use their creativity to create a classroom environment that helps students learn.

As science: Teachers follow logical steps to achieve goals.

Who is an educator?

An educator is a person who facilitates learning and development in others, typically in a formal or informal setting. Educators can be referred to as *Teachers* in primary, secondary, or post-secondary education; *Professors* who teach and conduct research in universities and colleges; *Instructors* who teach specific skills or subjects, often in a vocational or technical setting; *Trainers* who provide training and development programs for adults, often in a corporate or professional setting; or *Mentors* who guide and support individuals in their personal and professional development. The key characteristics of educators include: knowledgeable, effective communicators, patient and empathetic, adaptable, and passionate about learning (Marzano in Muhammad, 2025).

Historical Evolution of Teaching in Nigeria

In Nigeria, indigenous and Islamic educational practices were prevalent before the emergence of western education and colonialism. Indigenous teaching can be found in almost every Nigerian culture and tradition which involves: historical information, comprising the creation of stories, folklore, myths, legends, and historical accounts. Indigenous stories also serve as a means of transferring knowledge, values, and teachings from one generation to another as well as preserving the cultural identity and heritage of indigenous communities. Their narratives may also convey important lessons, moral values, and spiritual or religious teachings, reflecting the worldview and interconnectedness of the indigenous community with their natural surroundings. Indigenous stories are an integral part of cultural identity, oral tradition, and the collective memory of indigenous peoples' worldview (Ekuafeh et al in Muhammad et al 2024).

On the other hand, the practice of Qur'anic schools in Nigeria (teaching and learning) is as old as the advent of Islamic religion itself since they are both inseparable. The essence of *Almajiri* or Qur'anic schools is for educating and preparing a young Muslim for higher studies that will make them functional in the society. The practice of the *Almajiri* school system where parents entrust their children to a teacher known as *Malam*, in the search for knowledge, dates back to the first century even before the advent of western education in Nigeria. The system functioned effectively across the Northern communities in Nigeria prior to colonial intrusion. Christian missionaries later introduced formal or western education with the establishment of schools like the Methodist school for preparing new converts on how to read the scriptures and learn more about Christianity (Muhammad, 2023). Then, teaching was noble, teachers were highly regarded and considered as revered, in every community where teachers resided, they served as consultants on matters affecting the community and their contributions were regarded. People were also eager to be teachers for it symbolised dignity and teachers were treated with mutual respect.

Yet, Nigeria's teaching sector needs a systematic transformation to reflect 21st century realities in areas such as digital technology which will in turn improve teachers' performance and contribute immensely to meaningful educational developments. Teachers in Nigeria should also align themselves with best global practices through personal up-skilling and capacity building for future-ready education and the restoration of the prestige of teaching, among others.

Current Challenges Facing the Teaching Profession

Today, teaching in Nigeria is regarded as a last resort for educated unemployed graduates, particularly among the have-nots, and this has led to the proliferation of private schools, many of whose teachers are unqualified. Unfortunately, many of these private schools are notorious for low-cost remunerations, about one-fifth of what public schools pay. There are also thousands of *Quranic* and Islamic school teachers in northern Nigeria who rely on alms, charity, and weekly fees of 50 or 200 naira per month, while some *Quranic* teachers adopt the practice of sending their students to street begging to get support. These teachers are living in abject poverty, believing that their reward for teaching is in heaven, as if they are destined to teach (Muhammad, 2025).

Meanwhile, it is an indisputable fact that many Nigerian politicians are used to offering teaching jobs to their supporters, with or without any teaching qualifications, as political compensation for political jobs well done. The teaching offer bazaar led to the prevalence of faking and forging teaching certificates or presenting other peoples' certificates to grab the offer. This type of fraud is prevalent in every level of education and this is posing grave danger to the integrity of teaching and the learning process; it is also aiding mass failure among Nigerian students. Evidently, as part of its bold decision to improve the quality of teaching, the Nasir El-Rufai-led Kaduna State Government disengaged about 2,357 unqualified primary school teachers who failed a competency test in 2017.

The education sector is well known for its very low service delivery in areas such as part time teaching, marking, invigilation, examination works etc. In Kano public schools for example, educators were recruited to teach on a voluntary basis before they were considered for temporary or permanent appointment. Similarly, remuneration of part time teaching at the tertiary

level of education is meager ranging from #6,000 to #12,000 per semester for three months and so on. Consequently, Olagunju (2024) stated that during the 50th anniversary of the University of Ibadan in 1998, IFRA-Nigeria organised an international conference on 'The Dilemma of Post-Colonial Universities'. Professor Ayuba Hudu of Ahmadu Bello University delivered a paper on the working conditions of staff of Nigerian universities, using his ABU environment as his field of study. Sobering as Hudu's findings and conclusions were, they were what we have always known to be true. In one instance, he discovers that as of the time of his study, "Ahmadu Bello University continues to pay N800 as night allowance to senior lecturers on research trips while officers of the same rank in the civil service were paid N7,000." He quotes a lecturer: "Both my remuneration and working facilities are grossly inadequate".

Nevertheless, the predicament of teaching flight affects the choice of teaching as a long-term career by Nigerians, thereby discouraging many from pursuing it. Many students reject studying education in the tertiary education level as occasioned by a lack of interest in teaching and poor remuneration coupled with the societal negative perception on teaching. It is evident that majority of the candidates processed by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for admission into the various tertiary institutions prefer universities and polytechnics rather than colleges of education. Candidates with high UTME (Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination) points are absorbed into professional courses other than teaching in the universities, followed by those with average points who are also admitted into other courses in the polytechnics, while those left over, often the majority with very low grades, are admitted into teacher education institutions. Also, the impression that teaching remains a dumping

ground for many corps members without any teaching qualifications is certain beyond any doubt. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) practice of using corps members as make-shift/lowcost teachers in schools during their mandatory NYSC scheme is counterproductive. This practice defies the long-standing policy of engaging the best graduates as teachers, since teachers are primary producers of all secondary manpower requirements (Muhammad, 2025).

Yet teachers are needed to teach millions of children enrolled into the Nigerian education system. Still, none of the colleges of education or universities of education have enough students to be trained as educators these days. It has been observed that with the massive spread of private universities in Nigeria, none is solely meant for producing teachers, the teacher education sector is now left at the mercy of the common man or the unemployed graduate from the middle class. There is no doubt that this predicament is connected to the poor remuneration of teachers which is incomparable to other juicy professions. Nigeria happens to be among the countries where teachers earn a little. For example, in Germany, teachers receive the highest wages; this was confirmed by Chancellor Angela Merkel who, when once asked to increase other workers' remunerations to that of teachers, said she cannot compare other workers with those who teach them (Muhammad, 2025).

Olagunju (2024) indicated that there was a time in this country when professors earned more than federal permanent secretaries. A professor in 1973 was on a consolidated annual salary of £3,000; permanent secretaries earned £2,800. Today, the most senior professor does not take home N450,000 per month, which is below the pay of some elected local government councilors, while federal permanent secretaries gross home N1.3m monthly. Therefore, with the

declining welfare and remuneration of teachers, one may be ashamed to state the gains reaped from the 47 years existence (1978-2025) of Academic Staffs Union of Universities(ASUU), the 94 years existence (1931-2025) of Nigeria Union of Teachers(NUT), and the many years of other educator unions.

However, from 1999 to date, there has been massive brain drain in the Nigerian education sector with many qualified and experienced educators abandoning their teaching career for juicy political appointments, seeking election, or leaving Nigeria. To paraphrase Professor Maicibi Alhas Nok in one of his lecture series at the Nasarawa State University, Keffi, many academics struggle harder to escape the academia for greener pastures due to declining respectability for the profession, highest teacher to students ratio, and the deteriorating condition of service etc.

Added to the above predicaments is the latest tragic report of a colleague, a veteran primary school headmaster in Kano, who lost his life in a terrifying circumstance. He embarked upon a part time load-lifting alongside many teachers to supplement their income, due to financial strain and economic uncertainty. On Wednesday, 26th March, 2025, while on his load-lifting routine, he slumped and tumbled from a truck thereby cracking his head. He was rushed to the hospital and passed away two days later (May his soul rest in peace). Many hearts were broken and eyes welled up with tears at his funeral, narrating different distressing ordeals which educators continue to undergo. Apart from the intense physical and mental pressures attached to educators' workload, plus other hazardous public and community services they are insincerely destined to render, there is no comprehensive health care and life insurance package to cater for teachers.

Kaico! (regrettably in Hausa) Despite the 32 years (1993-2025) of the professionalisation of teaching in Nigeria, and notwithstanding that the highest number of educators served and are serving in different levels and capacities of the Nigerian governments, nothing has changed for better. Even with the union's practice of diplomacy, loyalty and lobby, the end result is strike action, the last option and the only language authorities understand better. Public primary school teachers suffer years of neglect, without promotion, annual increment, minimum wage implementation and arrears, and the non-payment of their salaries and the violation of their other rights. Among the woes of secondary school teachers are: poor minimum wage implementation and arrears, low working conditions, poor welfare packages and other entitlements. While at the tertiary level, the issues are also unpaid promotion and minimum wage arrears, continued salary shortfalls and under payment, the worst lecturer-to-student ratios in the world, underfunding issues, negative education policies, salary backlog and other entitlements.

Being an educator in Nigeria is no longer sustainable. For example, the viral ordeal of a professor from Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto seeking crowd-funding of ₦13 million for urgent medical treatment could not be realised. He was bedridden and helpless till he died. Many educators are suffering in silence. The challenges are too much to bear. From struggling to eat, to struggling to pay rent and children's school fees, to battling with health issues coupled with inflation and hardship in which the financial strain cannot meet the expenses, many educators and their families are condemned to poverty. Even their daily transportation to schools has affected teaching and learning negatively. For example, many educators that could afford to drive to schools in the past are no longer doing it

now due to the hike in fuel price, the majority of the educators are now managing public transport or trekking to schools; this is affecting their work and a clear testament to governments' failure in education.

Emerging Trends in Teaching (21st Century Nigeria)

Teaching in Nigeria is associated with the traditional mode of delivery which later became burdensome leaving many educators outdated in their pedagogical approach. Most teachers still get 20th century training, 19th century infrastructure, and expect 18th century respect. Innovative pedagogics aims to make learning more effective, efficient, and enjoyable, while also preparing students for success in an ever-changing, challenging, and complex world.

Educators must prepare for emerging trends, such as the innovative AI-driven pedagogical strategies in education which hold exciting opportunities for promoting equitable access and enhancing learning outcomes. In Nigeria, if properly adopted and incorporated into the education sector, it will guarantee inclusive and quality education for all, where innovation is entrenched into the curricular amidst the futuristic world educational challenge (Chan in Chan & Colloton, 2023). Other emerging trends are:

- Digital learning platforms
- Skills-based and competency-based education
- TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) modernisation
- Flipped classroom
- Project-based learning
- Virtual and augmented reality
- Blended and hybrid learning
- Personalised learning
- Competency based education
- EdTech platforms

- Data-driven instructions
- Immersive learning etc.

Disciplines.com (2025) states that innovative pedagogy involves experimenting with novel methods, techniques, and tools to improve student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Bing (2025) opines that incorporation of digital technologies shall enhance teaching and learning processes, which include online learning, digital resources, and multimedia content. Technological integration has the potential to increase accessibility, personalise learning, and improve engagement.

Futurology of Educators in Nigeria

Educators remained the greatest access in every nation who traditionally carry themselves with utmost dignity and decorum. Olagunju (2024) said that a group of people whose work demands great mental work should be properly paid so that undue external pressures for survival, decent appearance etc. are not allowed to distract their concentration. Until such is done, it will not be fair to talk of their work output - especially when the facilities and working environment are non-existent. The future roles of teachers shall be:

- Facilitators rather than knowledge transmitters
- Digital content creators
- Mentors and innovation drivers
- Learning experience designers
- Personalised and adaptive learners
- Curators and Specialists
- Blended and hybrid, anywhere-anytime learning
- Competent, skills and portfolio-based assessors
- Interdisciplinary, problem-based projects experts etc.

The impact of automation on teaching is rewriting the teaching profession, taking away drudgery, creating new demands, and simplifying the job through grading, content creation, basic tutoring etc. Educators must adapt or should be ready to be sidelined. Among the several automation impacts on teaching and learning are accessibility, consistency, etc.

There is a lifelong learning requirement for educators; teaching is no longer a “learn once teach forever” job. With the emergence of new technologies, pedagogy updates, and new education policies, educators should keep learning, researching, mastering subjects, or become obsolete. Lifelong teaching requirements entail all-encompassing and continuous learning for personal growth.

Prospects and Transformation

Teaching is no longer what it was in the past. The role of teachers is shifting from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side” — and toward “teaching architect, and human connection hub that can compete in the futuristic world. It is very clear that in most countries of the world today, teaching is taken very seriously as a profession. Yet, in Nigeria, there are many processes that may redefine the teaching profession, these include:

Policy reforms: This is about changing how teachers are trained, licensed, supported; there is a global drive to professionalise and improve teaching. Nigeria, through TRCN, is mid-way through that mandatory license shift. The TRCN Act 2004 got 60% compliance in 2018, with a target of 100% by 2028. If all the reforms succeed, teaching by 2030 will become a respected, tech-enabled, and middle-class profession.

Teacher professional development: This is continuous learning through capacity building programmes, seminars, conferences, workshops and upgrades. It includes ICT training, job-embedded coaching, active learning etc.

Improved welfare systems: It includes better pay, financial security, housing mortgage, pension and gratuity reform, comprehensive health insurance for educators, the separation of full Teacher Salary Structure from that of the civil service, the Federal Government of Nigeria already approved this, states should follow suit.

Public-private partnerships: This involves the government and the private sector jointly funding, managing or delivering education services. It combines public reach and equity mandate with private efficiency plus innovation. It aims towards accountability, risk sharing, managing teacher shortage, and closing the funding gap. Nigeria’s teaching profession is at a transformation point; the old system is collapsing through the new transformation force. Educators need a safe and supportive teaching environment to enable them to compete on the globe.

Conclusion

Olagunju (2024) stated that a society that pauperises its teachers pulverises its future. He said he agrees with Roger's position that the “quality of a college's product is a function of its teachers.” Quality stands and falls with teachers. Quality will fall where teachers struggle to live, because, as Rogers wrote, “greatness of vision and the capacity to fulfill it rarely flourish in privation. However, Nigeria faces significant challenges in integrating technology into education, including inadequate internet connectivity, erratic electricity supply, and insufficient access to hardware, lack of necessary technical skills to effectively utilise technology,

high costs associated with purchasing devices, software, and maintenance.

Suggestions

Against the foregoing, this paper offers the followings suggestions:

1. *The game-changing mechanism:* ASUU as a top education union among other education unions in Nigeria should design and coordinate the formation of a central education union where educators can collectively strategise and tirelessly work towards improving their welfare and agitate for better conditions of service.
2. TRCN as a statutory body responsible for licensing educators in Nigeria should, within its jurisdiction, ensure strict compliance with the TRCN Act in order to improve the quality of teaching among the diverse Nigerian educators without compromise (*No teacher, no TRCN*).
3. All education stakeholders comprising donor agencies, philanthropic organisations, and private individuals etc. should identify, scrutinise and continue to supervise genuine educational development plans for support.
4. The National Council on Education (NCE) is the highest body of the Federal Ministry of Education responsible for formulating educational policies in Nigeria. The body should ensure better educational reforms, policies and initiatives that can transform the education sector and prepare it for futuristic challenges without curricular overload.
5. Governments at all levels should holistically adhere to and ensure that the 26% benchmark set by UNESCO for annual budgetary allocation to education is faithfully implemented and all signed

agreements with education unions are kept.

6. Nigeria should invest in infrastructural facilities, develop digital literacy, and promote public-private partnerships to support technology integration in education and to enhance learning outcomes and accessibility among learners from diverse backgrounds and remote areas.

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