

TEACHERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL OF NIGERIA
HEADQUARTERS ABUJA

DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL OPERATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

1. PREAMBLE:

The Professional Operations Department is the nerve centre of the Council because it is charged with the implementation of ALL the mandates provided in the **TRCN Act 31 of 1993**. The other three Departments of the Council are service Departments that provide support to the activities of the Professional Operations Department.

The Department comprises of the:

- **Office of the Director,**
- **Five Divisions (domiciled at TRCN Headquarters),**
- **Twelve Zonal Offices (two in each of the six geo-political areas of the country), and**
- **State Offices in the 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).**

The five Divisions are as follows:

- ***Education and Accreditation.***
- ***Registration and Documentation***
- ***Certification and Licensing***
- ***Field Operations***
- ***Professional Regulations and Special Duties.***

In accordance with the Council's statutory mandates and best practices among professional regulatory agencies in Nigeria and overseas, the Department executes the following functions and activities:

- *Registration and licensing of qualified teachers.*
- *Accreditation, monitoring and supervision of the courses and programmes of teacher training institutions in Nigeria to ensure that they meet national and international standards. The institutions include the Colleges of Education, Faculties and Institutes of Education in Nigerian universities, Schools of Education in the Polytechnics, and the National Teachers Institute.*
- *Organisation of Internship Schemes and induction programmes for fresh Education graduates to equip them with the necessary professional skills before licensing them for full professional practice.*

- *Conduct of professional examinations and interviews to determine teachers that are suitable for registration.*
- *Establishment of national minimum standards for and execution of Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) to guarantee that teachers keep abreast of developments in the theory and practice of the profession.*
- *Organisation of Annual Conference of Registered Teachers (which is the first of its kind in Nigeria) intended to unite all teachers irrespective of social class or the level of education system to which they belong.*
- *Publication of a register of qualified and licensed teachers in Nigeria in hard copies and available through the World Wide Web.*
- *Enforcement of professional ethics among teachers using the Teachers Investigating Panel (TIP) and the Teachers Tribunal.*
- *Prosecution in the law court of unqualified persons performing the job of teachers in contravention of the TRCN Act section 17(2).*
- *Acting as the voice of the voiceless teachers and continuously initiating/driving public policies and practices that could reposition the teaching profession in Nigeria as first among equals.*

2. OVERVIEW OF YEAR 2008

The year 2008 was challenging yet so exciting and took the Council to greater heights. From January to December, the nation was treated to a great array of professional activities which created professional consciousness and dignity of the teaching profession in Nigeria. Most prominent among the activities were:

- **Technical workshop** organized to induct members of the Teachers Investigating Panel (TIP) in all States of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory.
- **A special farewell tour** of all twelve TRCN Zonal Headquarters by the former Registrar/Chief Executive, Chief Anjikwi Musa Ciwar (OON), just before he retired in March 2008.
- **A working visit** of the Director of Professional Operations to all States of the Federation leading a high level TRCN team to dialogue with stakeholders on new strategies for accelerating the bid to professionalise teaching in Nigeria.
- **Re-opening of all TRCN state offices** nationwide which were closed as part of the 2006 Reform in the Federal Ministry of Education.
- **Introduction of policy and implementation of Induction of Education Graduates** at point of graduation in all teacher training universities, colleges, institutes and schools in Nigeria.
- **Taking effect of licensing** for registered teachers in which all registered teachers were expected to carry licenses valid for each year before they could be considered as being in good standing, professionally.
- **A national law workshop** to review TRCN Act 31 of 1993.
- **Implementation of the World Bank/TRCN Development Project** for Science and Technical teachers at post-basic education level (called **STEP-B Project**).
- **Execution of the first Professional Qualifying Examination (PQE)**, the first of its kind for teachers in Nigeria.
- **TRCN coalition** with other Federal Education agencies and Development partners (particularly UNESCO and COMPASS/USAID) in the sponsorship and organisation of numerous developmental programmes which included capacity building workshop for teachers and school managers and general pedagogical training.
- **Active participation in international conferences** in the United Kingdom, Egypt, Ghana, etc.

- *Strengthening relationship with **sister teaching councils overseas** with most foreign countries now requiring letters of professional standing from TRCN before giving teaching licenses to Nigerians who wish to teach abroad.*
- *Production and nationwide distribution of the first hard copies of the **register of teachers** in Nigeria with records of over 700,000 registered teachers.*
- *Release of **new editions** of TRCN international journal for professional teachers, the TRCN juicy newsmagazine called TRCN Professional Diary, etc.*
- *Publication of **manuals** covering several key TRCN professional activities, for instance, Guidelines on the accreditation of teacher education programmes in Nigeria; manual on continuous professional development of teachers; National Minimum Standards for the Professional Diploma in Education; etc.*
- *Leading the **voice for teachers** in all critical national fora including the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE), National Council on Education, etc.*
- *Other numerous routine but significant and special activities.*

3. INDUCTION OF TEACHERS INVESTIGATING PANEL (TIP):

The TIP members in late 2007 were sworn—in by the Chief Judges of the various states. In order to quickly equip them to commence the arduous task ahead, TRCN’s first major programme in 2008 was a technical workshop organized in the six geo-political zones of the country to acquaint the TIP members with their functions and provide them with the necessary working materials. The induction was a turning point as it generated so much interest and saw the TIP members pledging to do their best. The TIP is empowered by the TRCN Act 31 of 1993 to investigate cases of professional misconduct, incompetence and negligence by registered teachers in order to send relevant cases to the Teachers Tribunal for prosecution and sanctions.

4. SPECIAL FAREWELL TOUR OF FORMER REGISTRAR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The pioneer TRCN Registrar/Chief Executive, Chief Anjikwi Musa Ciwar (OON, MNAE.), by March 31st, 2008 retired meritoriously from public service after clocking the mandatory 60 years of age. He was a monumental personality that could not have quietly left the scene. Therefore, to bid farewell to his teeming stakeholders and to take stock of TRCN operations and facilities in the TRCN zones, he paid visit to the 12 TRCN zonal headquarters. This was in itself a great activity towards accomplishing the mandates of the Council because during the visit he had opportunity to meet very top stakeholders, including Executive Governors of the states, Honourable Commissioners of Education, community leaders, etc to appraise TRCN achievements under his eight year reign as Registrar/Chief Executive and to solicit their continued support.

5. WORKING VISIT OF DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL OPERATIONS TO STATES

At the exit of the TRCN pioneer Registrar/Chief, TRCN Management was highly desirous of doing anything that could sustain the great height which the pioneer Registrar/Chief Executive had taken TRCN to. The Management therefore brainstormed and came up with a series of strategic policies and programmes intended to consolidate earlier gains and to launch TRCN further towards the ultimate dreams of professions. The Management equally as a matter of strategy felt that there must be grassroots sensitization and mobilization in order to carry stakeholders along in the implementation of the new policies and programmes.

These strategies warranted an unprecedented visit of the Director of Professional Operations, Dr. Steve Nwokeocha, accompanied by other staff in the Directorate cadre, to all the 36 states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The team spent just a day in each state, covering the federation in record 37 working days! **It was a most aggressive and excruciating tour never before seen in TRCN. It was simply like a military operation. In each state, the team engaged stakeholders from 8.00 am till the dark hours of the day only to move by night to the next state; and the beat went on...**

Prominent among stakeholders that hosted the TRCN team were:

- *Honourable Commissioners of Education,*
- *Vice Chancellors of universities,*
- *Rectors of polytechnics,*
- *Provosts of colleges of education,*
- *Deans of faculties of education in the universities,*
- *National Teachers Institute*
- *Executive chairmen of State Universal Basic Education Boards,*
- *Executive Secretaries of Secondary Education Management Boards/Teaching Service Commissions,*
- *Nigerian Union of Teachers,*
- *Parents Teachers Associations,*
- *The Mass media,*
- *Etc.*

The issues trashed out with stakeholders during the tour included:

- *Re-opening of TRCN state offices nationwide,*
- *Institutionalization of Teachers Investigating Panels,*
- *Fixing of appropriate teacher registration fees and annual subscription as well as modalities for collection of the subscription. A serious option on the table was to get employers of teachers to check off the subscriptions at point where salaries are paid to registered teachers. Both the registration and subscription fees were also tabled for upward review for the very first time since TRCN began operations eight years ago, in order to meet up with the realistic cost of doing business.*
- *Commencement of professional qualifying examination for teachers intending to register with TRCN,*
- *The development of National Professional Standards for teachers,*
- *Continuous professional development,*
- *Accreditation of teacher education programmes,*
- *Registration and induction of Education students at point of graduation,*
- *Online registration of teachers,*
- *And other various topical issues concerning the teaching profession in Nigeria.*

6. TRCN SPECIAL VISIT TO DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF LAGOS STATE

TRCN Director of Professional Operations led a high level team to pay a thank you and special consultation visit to the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Chief (Mrs.) Sarah Sosan, who is a teacher and at the time in charge of the Lagos State Ministry of Education. The thank you visit was in respect of very excellent relations between TRCN and Lagos State since inception of TRCN which culminated

in the former Governor of Lagos State, Otunba Ahmed Tinubu, donating a twin duplex (building) with large premises to serve as TRCN zonal office for the South Western States of Nigeria. In addition, Lagos State, which has the largest number of teachers in Nigeria had also through the mobilization of the State Government registered massively its teachers with TRCN and encouraged them to actively participate in other professional activities like training, establishment of teachers investigating panel, etc stipulated by TRCN.

The TRCN team was personally received by the Deputy Governor in company of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and other top officials of the State. The meeting was very warm and provided a great platform for the exchange of ideas and strong promises of mutual co-operation between the State and TRCN.

7. RE-OPENING OF STATE OFFICES NATIONWIDE

TRCN during the year re-opened all of its offices in all 36 states of the Federation and strengthened its twelve zonal offices located across the six geo-political areas of the country. The state offices were closed in 2006 in line with the Reform of the Federal Ministry of Education at the time. However, the closure triggered agitation from stakeholders in the states, including Honourable Commissioners of Education, Nigeria Union of Teachers, and tertiary institutions which argued that it would be impossible for teachers in their states/institutions to travel far away to the locations of the TRCN zonal offices to transact routine professional businesses. These stakeholders followed the agitation up with letters to TRCN and even a promise to establish and maintain the TRCN offices if given the opportunity. In any case, most of TRCN state offices were previously donated by State Governments to demonstrate their solidarity with the latest efforts to professionalise teaching in Nigeria through TRCN. Consequently, TRCN after consultations with stakeholders during the 2008 nationwide tours re-opened offices in all states and the Federal Capital Territory. Many state governments released once again office accommodation, furnishing and logistical support to ensure that the offices operate successfully.

8. INDUCTION OF EDUCATION GRADUATES

Following the successful completion of the 2008 TRCN nationwide tour which secured a popular consensus among the tertiary institutions for the commencement of registration and induction of Education students at point of graduation, TRCN officially sent policy circulars to all teacher training institutions in Nigeria requesting them to start the practice. The circular covered the National Teachers Institute, colleges of education, faculties and institutes of education in universities and schools of education in the polytechnics.

The credit for the idea/practice of induction at point of graduation goes to the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, which is Nigeria's premier university. The Faculty was the very first teacher training institution to request TRCN to induct its graduates. The first induction therefore took place at the Faculty in 2007 and involved lecturers from other Faculties of the University who came to the Faculty of Education to spend one year reading a *Diploma in Teaching in Higher Education* which met the standards for their admission into the teaching profession. The glamour, dignity and joy attracted by that attempt compelled the university to once again request TRCN to induct its 2008 graduates and to make the exercise a national practice and this was done. The University of Ibadan in 2008 therefore went a step further to schedule its second induction ceremony to be part of the activities that marked the 60th Anniversary of the University. The induction this time covered both Education graduates in First Degree and those with Diploma in Teaching in Higher Institutions. The induction was a remarkable national event as it was graced by virtually all principal officers of the

University led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, executive officers of the Nigerian Academy of Education, Deans of faculties of education of other universities, etc. TRCN also paid for the full national/live broadcast of the event by Africa's largest television network, the Nigeria Television Authority.

In reaction to the success recorded in the induction initiative, several teacher training institutions equally conducted their induction just before the end of the year. Among them were other universities, colleges of education, schools of education in the polytechnics and the National Teachers Institute.

9. COMMENCEMENT OF LICENSING OF REGISTERED TEACHERS

The year under review marked the first time since the operation of TRCN that emphasis moved up to the licensing of registered teachers. Earlier in 2007, the National Council on Education had directed TRCN to start without further delay to issue teaching licenses to registered teachers as done in other professions. TRCN therefore, after the 2008 nationwide tour implemented the directive and charged employers of teachers to help their teachers to orderly collect their annual subscriptions so as to facilitate the issuing of the licenses. The licenses are to be renewed annually upon payment of the subscription fee for the current year. However, due to the protracted industrial actions embarked during the year by the Nigeria Union of Teachers in demand for the payment of a professional salary (Teachers Salary Structure) as obtained with their other professions, most states could not effectively comply. But many teachers at the tertiary levels and several individual teachers across the states complied.

10. THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON TRCN ACT CAP 31 OF 1993

After the operationalisation of the TRCN Act Cap 31 of 1993 for about eight years and with the inputs gathered from the field over the years on the need to review certain aspects of the Law, TRCN organized a national workshop to determine the aspects necessary for review. The workshop was anchored by a renowned legal firm/consultant and attracted legal luminaries from across the country. It further involved all TRCN Management and senior staff including all 12 zonal coordinators, legal advisers of the Teachers Investigating Panels in the states, etc. From inputs received at the workshop, TRCN came up with a draft of the amended TRCN Act and forwarded same to the Honourable Minister of Education for necessary action. The Honourable Minister passed the draft to the Legal Unit of the Ministry which took further important steps. One of the most important amendments was to change the name of the Council from TEACHERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL OF NIGERIA to TEACHING REGULATORY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA. This ensured that the acronym, TRCN, remained the same and that the public could readily observe, right from the name of the Council, that the mandates are not limited to registration of teachers but extend to the overall regulation/administration of the teaching profession in Nigeria. It should be noted that the name of TRCN had been a major draw-back over the years as most stakeholders erroneously thought that TRCN had only one mandate, that is, registration of teachers.

11. PROFESSIONAL QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

October 2, 2008 marked the coming into effect of the policy that teachers wishing to register with TRCN must undergo professional qualifying examination (PQE), to test their suitability for admission into the profession. Consequently, the first PQE took place on a Saturday, December 13, 2008 in all state capitals in Nigeria as well as the Federal Capital Territory. It was an epoch making event as that was the very first of such professional examination in the history of the country. TRCN worked with Deans of faculties of education in the universities and schools of education in the colleges of

education to develop the PQE questions. TRCN further collaborated with the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to administer and mark the questions. The use of JAMB examination techniques and technology in the exercise made it possible for the results of the examination to be ready within 48 hours after the examination! The results eventually got circulated to all states concerned and also posted on the TRCN website. Certificates of registration were equally distributed to all successful candidates. Over five thousand teachers (5,000) nationwide applied to write the examination. Teachers who failed the examination are given two more chances of re-sitting after which their application would be permanently invalidated in accordance with the PQE rules and regulations.

12. WORLD BANK/TRCN STEP B PROJECT

TRCN during the year, once again, satisfied the World Bank about its capability to serve as an organ for the execution of special World Bank education projects in Nigeria. This time, the World Bank had a project for the development of Science and Technical Teachers in Post-Basic (STEP-B) Education level, which it intended to get implemented using teacher training institutions and related agencies. TRCN sent in proposals to develop a comprehensive data base of the Science, Technical and Mathematics (STM) teachers at the Post-Basic Education level in Nigeria so as to make robust the data on that category of teachers in Nigeria available for national and international use. The World Bank gave a nod to the proposal and released the sum of twenty million Naira (N20,000,000) at first instance. TRCN therefore in collaboration with the World Bank opened a project office in TRCN, bought a Hilux pickup van and other facilities which enabled the immediate commencement of the project. At the close of the year, the STEP-B project had held nationwide sensitization workshops on the project as required by the World Bank Terms of Reference (TOR), participated in capacity building workshops within and outside Nigeria, started developing the special STEP-B website, online facilities, data gathering instruments, etc needed for the success of the assignment. TRCN during the year also received special praise from the World Bank regarding its excellent performance on the job.

13. COALITION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

In the course of the year, TRCN as a matter of routine constructively engaged several critical stakeholders too numerous to mention by holding joint meetings, collaborating on projects, attending their conferences, workshops and special events, donating money to support their programmes, etc. TRCN in particular established closer ties with leading non-governmental organisations like CSACEFA (Civil Societies Action Coalition on Education for All), etc. This followed a visit to the organisation led by the then TRCN Acting Registrar/Chief Executive. TRCN equally joined UNESCO to fund and organize capacity building training for school head teachers and principals which was highly commended by stakeholders. Some other stakeholders honoured TRCN for excellent performance by giving outstanding awards to principal officers, for instance, the award of Millennium Development Ambassador giving to TRCN Director of Professional Operations by the Teachers Without Borders, an international organisation working to actualize the MDG goals on Education. Other partners engaged during the year included:

- *Agencies of the Federal Ministry of Education.*
- *Senate and House Committees on Education in the National Assembly.*
- *Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes of Education in the universities.*
- *Nigerian Academy of Education*
- *Teachers unions and associations – NUT, COEASU, ANCOPESS, STAN, COPSHON, etc.*

- *National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools.*
- *The media.*
- *Regulatory agencies of other professions – Council of Legal Education of Nigeria, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, etc.*
- *Development partners – World Bank, British Council, UNESCO, ILO, USAID, COMPASS, ENHANSE, DFID, JICA, etc.*
- *Civil society organizations and many other stakeholders.*

14. JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION (JCCE)/NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION (NCE)

TRCN as a prominent member of the JCCE and NCE effectively participated in all meetings that held during the year, from Gombe State to Akure and eventually, Katsina. It sent memos on a number of policy issues concerning the teaching profession in Nigeria which were all endorsed by the NCE. The issues endorsed included the need to enforce the provisions of the TRCN Act that cases of teachers' professional misconduct, negligence and incompetence should be mandatorily reported to the Teachers Investigating Panel; the commencement of licensing regime which requires employers of teachers to ensure that teachers under them have teaching licenses that are valid for the current year; the revised teachers registration fees and annual subscriptions; the professional qualifying examinations for teachers seeking registration; registration and induction of education students at point of graduation; etc. The fact that the NCE is the highest body in Nigeria that advises the Federal Executive Council on matters of Education makes the endorsement of these and other TRCN policies to be very significant milestones.

15. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

TRCN was abroad to honour a number of international obligations in form of meetings and conferences concerning education and the teaching profession in particular. A very significant conference attended was the Annual Conference of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) of the United Kingdom. The UCET is a body of all teacher training universities and colleges in the UK and holds conferences annually to assess progress in the training, re-training and professionalisation of teaching in the country. It is an eminent gathering of the biggest names in the teaching profession in the country and features the latest issues that dominate discussion in the teaching field in both the country and around the world. It is notable that TRCN was the only agency outside the United Kingdom that was invited to participate in the conference and TRCN had received the invitation and participated for four consecutive years. The 2008 conference was attended by the then Acting Registrar/Chief Executive and the Director of Professional Operations.

The United Nations University's Institute of Software Technology based in Macau, China during the year under review convened a global conference on "Electronic Governance" which held at the German University in Cairo, Egypt. Virtually all countries of the world had delegation to the conference. TRCN (represented by the Director of Professional Operations) was part of the Nigerian delegation to the conference that included the National IT Development Agency (NITDA), National Planning Commission, Federal Capital Development Authority, National e-Government Strategies (NeGSt) and Office of the Head of Service of the Federation. TRCN was chosen as part of the delegates due to its high rating by IT agencies such as NITDA, NeGSt etc as a frontline agency in the race to transform governmental operations in Nigeria from manual to electronic. The conference was convened to assess the progress made so far in the United Nations' quest to encourage governments of all countries to transit to electronic systems. The United Nations believes that

electronic governance has numerous advantages to the citizens which include increased access to goods and services, transparency, accountability, and increased interaction with other parts of the world. TRCN's participation in the conference underscored its commitment to efficient service delivery through electronic governance.

TRCN as well participated in an international research project instituted by the Commonwealth Nations Secretariat in London. The research, which was on teacher qualifications, aimed at determining the quality and other parameters of teaching qualifications across all the Commonwealth countries. TRCN's quality of submissions and inputs suggested to the South African Qualifications Authority (**SAQA**) which was anchoring the Project to suggest to the Commonwealth Secretariat that the TRCN Director of Professional Operations be co-opted as Consultant on the research project. The Commonwealth Secretariat gave approval and thus, the TRCN Director worked more closely on the research with **SAQA**.

Notably as well, TRCN sponsored the Kaduna State Coordinator, Hajia Amina Makarfi, to the international conference of psychologists in Germany. The Coordinator got invitation to attend from the conference organizers following the acceptance of her paper as one of the very important papers for presentation at the conference. The Coordinator came back with a lot of intellectual benefits and insights. It had earlier been mentioned as well that members of the STEP-B had foreign capacity building training to equip them with the technical know-how required in the execution of the STEP-B Project. The major STEP-B training took place in Ghana, West Africa.

16. WORKING WITH SISTER TEACHING COUNCILS ABROAD

The relationship between TRCN and sister teaching councils abroad got strengthened during the year with special meetings and intensification of the enforcement of letters of professional standing among member nations. This practice required teachers wishing to teach abroad to get registered first in their home countries so as to obtain a letter stating their professional standing. Otherwise, they would face a more rigorous and long-lasting fresh preparation as teacher before being licensed to teach in the foreign country. As a result of this practice, TRCN was able to keep track of Nigeria teachers abroad wishing to teach as the teaching councils in those countries had to write TRCN to confirm the status of such teachers. Countries that recorded pronounced number of Nigerians wishing to teach were topped by Canada and followed by the United Kingdom, United States of America, South Africa, Australia, etc. During the year, TRCN also received invitation to attend the 2009 Annual International Conference of Teaching Councils to be hosted in Cardiff, by the General Teaching Council for Wales, United Kingdom.

17. MAIDEN EDITION OF THE TEACHERS REGISTER IN NIGERIA

One of the key mandates of TRCN is to publish a register of teachers in Nigeria and to review the publication from time to time. For the first time since TRCN began and having successfully accomplished its computerization process which delayed the publication of the register, TRCN came out with the maiden edition of the register. The register was sent to major employers of teachers, nationwide particularly the State Universal Basic Education Boards, Secondary Education Management Boards, etc as well as displayed in TRCN offices in all states of the Federation. The stakeholders were requested to make observations and corrections where necessary so that a revised version could be published without delay in year 2009.

18. PUBLICATIONS

Part of TRCN's hallmarks are outstanding publications on vital aspects of the teaching profession. Among the publications were the *Nigerian Journal of Professional Teachers* which is an international journal that is now subscribed from all over the world. The *TRCN Professional Diary* is also a newsmagazine that is equally international in outlook and circulation, and colourfully covers activities of TRCN in detail from time to time. Others are publications of critical manuals that guide teachers and stakeholders on the path to professionalisation. These included the Manuals for continuous professional development, accreditation, monitoring and supervision of teacher education programmes in Nigeria, Teachers Investigating Panels and Teachers Tribunal; as well as the Teachers Code of Conduct, Teachers Handbook, etc.

19. SERVING AS KEY VOICE OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS IN NIGERIA – TEACHER SALARY STRUCTURE (TSS), ETC.

TRCN remained vocal in all matters and policies that have significant impact in the way the public perceive the teaching profession. At several times TRCN even addressed the press and made strategic contacts to the benefits of Nigerian teachers. However, due to the fact that not all TRCN operations as a government agency could be made public, some stakeholders were unable to understand the depth of TRCN's contributions towards promoting teachers welfare and dignity. A case study was the issue of TSS. The teachers started agitating for the TSS since 1992 under the umbrella of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT). In 2008 the issue reached a crisis point as the NUT embarked on an unprecedented national strike to compel government to implement the TSS. However, since the inception of TRCN in 2000, the National Council on Education saddled TRCN with the responsibility of leading advocacy and high level technical committees to design and recommend the TSS. Consequently, all the efforts including expenditure in terms of hosting of meetings and advocacies on TSS took place under the leadership of TRCN. Even while the 2008 strike between NUT and government lasted, TRCN was part of the Ministerial Task Team that was advising the Federal Government on the proper things fit for the teachers. At a time, TRCN even took risks to be so out-spoken in the process but was not deterred because it knew that Government would ultimately find its advice to be technically and professionally sound. However, for the fact that TRCN did not rush to make public statements in the mass media in support of teachers, which would have been contrary to the way a Government agency should conduct itself, several stakeholders felt that TRCN did not play a role. It was only with time and in the process of the nationwide mobilization tour of 2008 that most teachers and stakeholders became aware of TRCN invaluable contributions and then started to appreciate TRCN better as part of the struggle in the actualisation of the TSS.

20. SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

TRCN carried out other wide-ranging activities which added to the comprehensive and successful execution of its mandates during the year. Some of these were:

- **Taskforce on Certificate Distribution:** Due to complaints received from teachers on non-receipt of certificates nationwide, the Department advised the Management to form a high level task force to go to each concerned state to remedy the problem nationwide. Management task force teams were therefore dispatched to states and were able to identify and remedy the huge complaints from registered teachers.

- **Documentation of Teachers data:** The Department vigorously continued the comprehensive computerisation of teachers' vital records to build a credible database.
- **TRCN e-registration:** TRCN continued to pursue its development of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and facilities. Consequently, it constituted two committees charged with the mandate of perfecting the ICT infrastructure to conform to international best practice and standards. The committees had membership drawn from the National e-Government Strategies and Skye Bank which is the financier of teachers' online registration project. Technical advice from the committees helped TRCN to maximize its ICT opportunities.
- **Review of registration forms and spreadsheets:** TRCN further revised its form for teachers' application for registration as well as spreadsheets used in collating teachers' data. The revision was to make them compliant with the requirements of the new PQE regime, online registration of teachers and other soft- and hard-ware up grades over the years. The Council therefore procured and distributed new application forms and spreadsheets to states.
- **Certification/Licensing:** TRCN integrated the printing of teachers' certificates within the process of computerization of data thereby cutting down on the duplication of jobs and processes and saving resources. TRCN further started exploring the best and cost effective ways to massively produce teaching licenses. The exploration was still on by the end of year 2008.
- **Workshops and Conferences:** TRCN sponsored several staff in the TRCN headquarters and at the zones and states to many national conferences and workshops. Among the conferences were those that held at the University of Jos and Federal College of Education Zaria.

21. CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD:

The conduct of business in the Department has not been without challenges in spite of the achievements recorded. Some of these challenges and the steps needed to address them are enumerated below:

- **TIP:** Programmes like TIP operation and induction of fresh graduates were stunted due to limited advocacy among the graduating students themselves and to a large extent as a consequence of the docility of the general public that is unwilling to report cases of professional violation to respective states' TIPs. The situation is to be addressed in 2009 by stepping up sensitization.
- **PQE:** The conduct of the Professional Qualifying Examination also suffered a little set back particularly with respect to logistical arrangement and limited publicity which are common issues when executing new projects and innovations. However, Subsequent examinations are being planned to mitigate these challenges.
- **ACRT, CPD:** Some critical mandates of the Council like the Annual Conference of Registered Teachers (**ACRT**) and the Mandatory Continuous Professional Development (**MCPD**) were kept on hold all throughout the year because both programmes are capital intensive and the Council faced paucity of funds. The Department therefore is geared toward exploring the

purview of donor agencies that could partner with the Council in the execution of the programmes.

- **LICENSING:** Licensing of professional teachers is another area where the Council faced enormous challenges. The protracted industrial strike between the Government and Nigeria Union of Teachers over the issue of Teachers Salary Structure could not permit the payment of annual subscription by most teachers and the release of licenses. The production of teachers' licenses to meet current international standards (plastic pocket ID size with tough security marks) equally implied a very exorbitant cost of production which could hardly be supported by the annual subscription paid by the teachers. It is expected therefore that in 2009, TRCN will continue to explore the most practical ways to resolve the issue.
- **TRCN ACT:** The word, Registration, that is part of the TRCN name continued as in the past years to be a major challenge as it misled some members of the public to think that registration is the only duty of TRCN. This challenge was addressed by the law review now in process and can only be logically concluded when the TRCN Act is finally amended by the National Assembly.
- **STAFFING:** TRCN's performance especially in the execution of its statutory professional mandates was severely hampered by insufficient number of staff with the requisite high academic qualifications and cognate experience in tertiary education/teacher education delivery. The shortage arose not only due to the limited personnel funds available to TRCN but also and most importantly because TRCN is still on the Consolidated Public Salary Structure (CONSS) rather than the Consolidated Tertiary Institutions Salary Structure (CONTISS) which is where virtually all other professional regulatory agencies, tertiary institutions, examination bodies and other related agencies are placed. The implication of this was that some staff from the tertiary institutions that earlier joined TRCN later withdrew their services when they experienced serious loss in their earning power. TRCN therefore during the year under review drew the attention of the Honourable Minister of Education to the disparity and the Minister promptly sent a memo to the Salaries and Wages Commission requesting it to place TRCN on the CONTISS as proper. While the final outcome of the process is being awaited, it could be said that existing staff of the Department of Professional Operations are being stretched to a breaking point and yet quite a lot of mandates could regrettably be left unaccomplished.

Furthermore, the number of ordinary staff required to man the state and zonal offices were grossly inadequate. Many state offices had only one senior staff or at most two. This number proved too small to handle the entire business of the Council in the states covering all teachers and stakeholders from primary to the university levels and from registration and licensing to CPD, TIP, Induction, etc. A similar situation existed in the zonal offices and calls for the employment of more staff in the states and zones.

- **RE-TRAINING OF STAFF:** The need for re-training of staff could not be over-emphasized as TRCN over the years has transformed most of its professional operations from manual to electronic. With the commencement of online/real time services, computerization of data, conduct of PQE in partnership with JAMB which is reputed for high technology processes, production and distribution of teaching licenses using electronic processes, emerging intellectual themes which require the attention of regulators of the professions, etc, the

need to re-quip staff had never be more crucial. It is also unacceptable the TRCN could not afford to send a reasonable number of staff abroad to expose them to international best practices and benchmarks. However, the major hindrance in all of these has not been lack of political will but absence of funds. TRCN therefore will have to drive for more funds as well as re-prioritize its expenditure structure to give the needed sponsorship to staff for re-training at home and abroad.

- **STATE AND ZONAL OFFICES:** Though great success was achieved in re-opening and refurbishing states offices, many of the state and even zonal offices still require more facilities and infrastructure to perform their jobs creditably. It is expected that such critical needs will be addressed in the succeeding year.
- **HEADQUARTERS ACCOMMODATION:** At the headquarters, the little office accommodation available for not only the Department of Professional Operations but also all other TRCN Departments posed serious constraints to performance. There is total lack of store or warehouse for the storage of teachers' registration materials and other operations documents. Safe and reliable archiving of sensitive and vital operational documents therefore were and still remain elusive. This in turn resulted in occasional loss or undue exposure of vital documents and the situation adversely affects the documentation and retrieval of vital information and records of registered teachers. This is a problem that must be resolved if the credibility of the registration and documentation processes must remain intact.

Office space for staff is equally an "eye-sore" as over four to seven senior staff are cramped together in each office. It indeed seems bizarre that even two Divisions of the Operations Department, that is **Field Operations** and **Certification/Licensing**, share one office! The situation had led to congestion in both humans and documents including teachers' certificates. Also, the FCT office of TRCN also operates from just one room in the headquarters. At times, when over one hundred teachers gather at the same time for one service or the other, rendering the service to them becomes practically impossible due to lack of space and the teachers now dread coming forward for service. TRCN has been applying to the FCT administration for assistance in terms of office accommodation for the FCT office of TRCN but yet to get the relief sought.

TRCN further hoped to resolve its headquarters acute accommodation problem by getting approval of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) to erect its permanent office building within the same premises and the FEC granted both approval and funds for the building complex. Then suddenly, the FCT administration under its former Minister, Mal Nasir E'Rufai, suddenly revoked TRCN's right of occupancy, partitioned the premises into plots and sold them to individuals. As at the time of writing this report, TRCN was still stranded in terms of what next to do in the area of office accommodation at its headquarters. The Education Committees of the Federal House of Representatives and Senate have both vowed to retrieve the land to give it back to TRCN and all TRCN is doing for now is, wait.

- **MOBILISATION OF TEACHERS AND STAKEHOLDERS:** Nigeria is a very big and complex country to the point that it takes enormous resources and efforts to fully mobilize and sensitize its citizenry. Consequently, the relatively great efforts that TRCN had made in terms of overall mobilization and sensitization still drastically fell short of reaching the most part of

teachers and citizens of the country. It is not surprising to still come across stakeholders who say that they have never heard of the existence of TRCN! Or that they were never aware of TRCN programmes and activities. The problem is complicated considering the fact that teachers constitute the largest occupational group in Nigeria and are distributed across all nooks and crannies of the country where means of communication are lacking or limited. Therefore, TRCN must reprioritize to give more resources to mobilization and sensitization especially to promote advocacy visits to the grassroots, media coverage of TRCN professional activities and most importantly providing the right type of operational vehicles and staff which are at present seriously lacking.

22. CONCLUSION

The year 2008 went down on record as one of TRCN peak years – one of the years with the greatest recorded achievements. It marked specially the implementation of corner-stone policies which TRCN dreamt about over the years. These included the PQE, induction of teachers, issuing of teaching licenses, revision of registration fees and annual subscriptions, etc. It further sustained existing milestones such as scholarly publications, electronic governance, international connections and reputation, etc. It is therefore hoped that TRCN can build on these accomplishments in order to make the subsequent years even more glorious.

STEVE NWOKEOCHA, PhD, FCoT (UK).