

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF NIGERIAN TEACHERS

By

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an attempt has been made to raise issues with the concept of qualitative education particularly for teachers, teachers and qualitative education in Nigeria, the various strategies for training Teachers and the attendant problems. And lastly, the paper gives suggestions on the various ways of improving the quality of the teachers that are teaching in our various schools.

INTRODUCTION

The three ingredients in the teaching-learning situation are the teacher, subject matter and the student (learner). Though the onus of learning rests with the student, whether he learn or not also depends on the teachers effectiveness in giving instruction in a way that it augments and promotes learning on the part of the student. It is therefore paramount to good teaching for the teacher to possess a solid knowledge of the specific subject matter as well as its related fields. This an-ending educational process, on the part of the teacher, involving continual professional growth (Ojo 1995). Teacher must also have a good knowledge and understanding of the learner in its complete entity as well as his needs and interest. It is this

knowledge and understanding, that will aid the teachers selection of the methodology and teaching techniques that are appropriate for presenting the desired knowledge

There is need for continuing training of teaches if qualitative education is to be maintained in our institutions. We live in a dynamic world with ever increasing knowledge, ideas and techniques at such marvelous rates that apparently sophisticated and fascinating inventions soon become outdated and unattractive junk in a matter of years (Anikweze 1995). Scientific and technological research is increasing our knowledge and ability to understand complex systems and processes in an ever-wider range of scales in education and technology. The natural sciences for instance have advance beyond their traditional scopes and are enjoying a highly creative phase, stemming from break through and advances in various field of education. The emergence of new disciplines and of interactions among the various fields; increasingly powerful computational tools; the rapid accumulation of scientific knowledge and technical skills and the need to bring these skills together and innovations are indeed having string implications on research, education and technology. Thus, we find the knowledge, teaching methodologies and lesson delivery techniques constantly changing and become richer and more challenging for teachers to implement.

Therefore, when employing teachers, there is need to take into consideration the quality of the teachers, types of training whether embrace the new innovation, ability to acquire more knowledge and repertory skills and exposition to the various field and modern techniques. The innovation that comes up every day in the method of teaching and learning need to be mastered to enable practicing teachers adopt to changing circumstances.

In olden days, teachers were regarded as the sole sources of knowledge and their appearances were accepted as authentic and immutable truths (Anikweze 1995). But the reverse is the case in the present day Nigeria, only teachers who are fast in acquiring new ideas and skills can maintain their relevance to their students. It is imperative to note that any teacher that would keep his head afloat in the midst of such challenge from students must keep abreast of new innovations in learning styles and teaching methodologies.

This paper therefore looks at the meaning of qualitative education in Nigeria. It also examines the quality of a good teacher and how to improve the quality of a teachers. An attempt shall also be made to highlight the various problems confronting qualitative teacher education in Nigeria.

The Concept of Qualitative Education

Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary defined Quality as standard of something when compared to other things like it refers to how good or bad the thus, quality of education programme is in our country. The quality of any programme or phenomena is that distinguishing parameter that brings out or exposes the worth or goodness associated with the programme (Olaitan et al. 1999) In Teacher education, quality should be the watch word of all its activities. And this quality must not be only in one aspect of the education programme but should exists in all its totality. By this, it means that the quality expressed as the functional character of the entire teacher education document or curriculum, with respect to content, instructional methods, instructional facilities and resource panel.

According to Anikweze (1989). Qualitative education should go beyond merely schooling the students to really educating them. It means students must

possess a well adjusted self-reliant productive, sociable personality in addition to evidence of intellectualism after schooling. Such a qualitative educated person is mentally alert, physically and vocationally skilled, attitudinally balanced, morally sound and spiritually committed to the services of God and mankind (Anikweze 1995). When such educated individuals operate in the Nigeria social-political arena, they would be able to argue bitterness. Their thought processes are usually broad-based not localized. To them criticism is never regarded as an attack.

The present education programme in this country is greatly affected by wrong educational channels, the structure of education in Nigeria lacks smooth provision for continuity. The beginning is as uncoordinated as the end.

The need for qualitative education start from primary school, and triumph over to secondary school or technical college. Unfortunately, the orientation is sluggish, unattractive and at times lack quality as a result of the use of uncoordinated and unorganized human and material resources. It is for this reason that best student away form the teacher training college institution and department of education at our various universities and back to teaching profession at the end of their polytechnic or university career (without teaching experience or training) due to lack of job opportunity. The remaining average students are left for the teacher training college. This Advantently results to the production of inefficient, and unemployable and graduates. This is the present state of education in Nigeria now.

Teachers and qualitative Education in Nigeria

Until quite recently, some educators and most non-professionals assume that any good teacher could teach any subject- given the basic knowledge of

subject matter. They argued that by acquiring the basic knowledge of the psychology of learning, any teacher could be made to teach any other subject with Minimum re-orientation. Suffice it to say that contemporary evidence in teacher education has provide the contrary to be true. Teachers need specific training in subject content and its methodology to guarantee their effectiveness. Besides teaching well, subject teachers exhibit some measure of identification with the fortune and traits of their subjects. In vocational for example teachers are seen as professionals of both the occupations relating to their teaching subjects and as professional educators.

The primary purpose of all teaching is the promotion of learning. Teachers therefore must be continuous learners as well reflect on the position of learners. Teachers cannot hope to promote learning if they are ignorant of what it takes to learn. They must of course know other ingredients of learning. Such ingredients include specific subject matter areas such as mathematics, science, English languages, or some other arts subjects; intelligence and its measurement about human development and motivation to mention few. The view of the teachers as facilitators of learning implies that they will study these things, not merely for their own sake but because the knowledge of them will contribute to their understanding of the chief task of promoting learning. It could perhaps be objected that to promote learning the teachers need not know about learning as such-all they need to know are the procedures, methods, techniques and strategies that promote it. But this is not enough because the most effective teaching requires the knowledge of learning itself.

In providing qualitative education, the role of teachers cannot be over-emphasized. It is the teachers that interpret educational policies and applies

principles and theories in real life practices. He holds trust for the implemented curriculum. Therefore, however lofty the ideas of policy-makers, however fashionable the planned learning experiences and however excellent the provided facilities is, the teacher if not of good quality, nothing of durable worth may be achieved (Anikweze 1995)

Ukeje (1991) opined that teachers are the most important professional in any nation. According to him;

If a medical Doctor makes a mistake a patient may die

If an engineer makes a mistake, a bridge or structure may collapse.

If a lawyer makes a mistake, somebody may lose his liberty

But if a teacher makes a mistake generation yet unborn may suffer the consequences. PP ?

Taking a clue from Ukeje's quotation, if there are no good teachers, at all level of our education, there will be no good professionals.

If we therefore want good professionals, that is a doctor who can cure patients, rather than kill, lawyer who successfully defend the accused rather than plead for leniency and engineers whose bridges do not collapse, then there is need for meaningful investment in teacher education to ensure a formidable qualitative education at all levels of our educational system.

It is very difficult to offer what we did not have therefore, a qualitative teacher must be qualitatively trained. The trained qualitative teacher must be in possession of those excellent qualities of an educational individual. He must not only have pass through a teacher training college for a relevant pedagogical knowledge and practical skills but also have allowed the training college or institution to pass through him, thereby transforming him into a good teacher.

A good teacher must possess high qualities of leadership since he can only be successful by inspiring students to work successful. Leadership in classroom involves knowledge, experience and an understanding of students as well as human relationship. Classroom leadership refers to exercise of authority, control, guidance and direction of the activities of students

Planning is a large part of every teacher's job. A well development plan for teaching according Nneji (2005) Nr may not guarantee success but that of it will guarantee failure in teaching. In other words good planning is imperative to good teaching. Planning helps to create good discipline, a purposeful classroom atmosphere, confidence, eliminates fumbling, make teaching lively, accurate, relevant and to the point. A good teacher must therefore know how to plan his lesson in order to accomplish the objective of the lesson.

All the stages of education right from primary school to secondary or college are impressionable stage of education. If pupils or students become disgusted, with boredom and confinement of school all associate learning with pain, fears, or repulsiveness, injury done to their education may be irreparable. A good teacher must know how to foster proper motivation in order to overcome all these problems.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to build up desirable behaviour in students and help students establish a code of conduct for themselves. Enforcement of rules is the most effective tool to discipline, when pupils know that the teacher takes swift action against misbehavior, they are likely to avoid misbehaviour. But when they see that others are getting away with breaking the rules they lose respect for rules and for the teacher. Teacher must therefore know how to administer discipline in the classroom. Effective learning requires that learner known how he or she is doing or progressing. Teachers are expected to provide opportunities and instruments for checking progress or achievements. The

teacher must also know how to manage his classroom for effective result

Ways of Improving the Quality of Teacher.

It is worthy to note that education of a nation cannot rise above the quality of its teachers, thus the quality of the teachers, becomes imperative for the nations technological development. Therefore, there is the need to preserve the primacy of education for meaningful development. To do this, the custodian of knowledge must be taken adequate care of and trained on a continuous basis for as Balogun (1983) suggests, the education of a teacher must be a continuing career long one.

There is also the need to ensure a through training of would be teachers. For in the final analyst, it is the product of the training colleges and Universities that would be employed to teach. According to Ojo (1995), the professional development of teachers should be seen as tripod of pre-service training. In service training is very important for all strata of the teaching profession.

According to him, other factors that can improve the quality of teachers when they are under training and when they on the job can be summarized as follows:

1. The Entry behaviour of the trainee (student teachers), for qualitative teacher production, the student teachers must meet minimum standard in their entry qualifications.
2. The content of their training curriculum should expose the trainee to the basic rudiment of their teaching career; the pedagogy and the practical skills needed.
3. There is need for improvement on the part of the teaching staff that are to train the student teachers in order to enhance effective performance to midwife qualitative production of teachers.

4. **Infrastructural Facilities and Equipment** should be made available for the training of the teachers. Many of the teachers' training colleges do not offer conducive atmosphere for learning due to lack of teaching materials, equipment and infrastructural facilities such as reliable supply of electricity, portable and safe drinking water, medical facilities and all season access routes to mention few.
5. **Provision of Fund:** the problem of funding is a perennial one especially as regards the heavy financial cost involved in training, the shortage of infrastructural facilities and lack of teaching staff are mainly due to insufficient funding, although mismanagement could equally contribute to this ugly situation. Any effort made to produce quality teachers may be hindered by insufficient fund.
6. **Attitude and Interest of Trainees (Student teachers):** Most student teachers do not easily submit to training or retraining because of a variety of reasons, some of these reasons are lack of interest and the attitude of the trainee toward the training or on the job training of the teachers.
7. **Organized seminars/workshops:** There is need to occasionally bring teachers that are serving together for a workshop or seminar. This will enhance their performance on the job.
8. **Compulsory Vocation/Refresher course:** The holiday period could be used for organizing courses aimed at improving the skills of teachers in teaching strategies.
9. **Part-time in-service program:** The three types of part time in-service training programme that are available to Nigerian teachers are:
 - (i) The Long Vacation Course or Sandwich Course offered by Colleges Education and the Institute of Education of Universities, leading to award of NCE/TTC, degree and postgraduate diploma in Education.

- (ii) **The Distance Learning System:** This is a weekend program being run by National Teacher Institute and open University involving courses that leads to the award of NCE, degree and PGDE.
 - (iii) **Correspondence Courses:** Some colleges of education and universities run correspondence courses leading to various degrees, diploma and certificates.
10. **Full-Time in-service Training:** In Nigeria, several types of training programmes are adopted in the training of the teachers. This could take form of study fellowships which teachers undertake with full pay or it could take the form of study leave without pay. The most vital issue is that the teaches appointment and continuity of service is assured at the completion of the training programme.
11. **Orientation Courses:** There are one-day or two-day occasional programmes for improving the teachers on their specialized and specific functions e.g.
- (i) Improvisation in subjects.
 - (ii) Quality Control and supervision for Head of the department
 - (iii) The use of ICT in the teaching of subjects
 - (iv) Maintenance of Laboratory Equipment.
123. **Improvement through feedback from school Supervisors/Inspectors:** Quality control at our schools and colleges demands regular inspection and efficient supervision of what happens in the school and colleges. It requires regular visitation on the part of supervisors and inspectors and recommendation for amendment are made at the end of each visitation. When all these

suggestions are carefully taking into consideration and provisions are made for the training of teachers, it is evident that quality will be produced to teach Nigerian student teachers at all level of education.

CONCLUSION

Since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. It therefore, becomes pertinent that special attention should be given to the training of the teachers to equip them with various skills required in the teaching profession. If qualitative education is to be maintained in our institutions, there is need for continue training of teachers. Adequate funds must be provided to cater for the payment of staff, infrastructural facilities, Equipment, and instructional materials.

The governments, the school system and the society should join hands in providing qualitative education for Nigerian teachers. They hold trust for the implementation of curriculum and interpret educational policies and apply principles and theories in real life practices.

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