

QUALITY TEACHING PERSONNEL: A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA) BY THE YEAR 2020

by

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Abstract

Education has been recognized and considered world-wide, as a powerful instrument for national development. It is a veritable instrument for development of all human potentials which is the most powerful lever for shaping the future. It is a tool through which a country's socio-economic, cultural, political, scientific and technological development are achieved. Education is the instrument for empowering both young and old with knowledge and skills which provide them access to productive employment. It is therefore very imperative that education obtained and provided in any country, should be handled by quality teaching personnel so as to produce the desired quality individuals that can manage the country's resources. The indispensability of education in human and national development has necessitated the United Nation's clarion call for 'Education For All' (EFA) in 1990 at Jomtien. To realize this laudable objective, teachers have important role to play, as they are the catalysts of every educational system at all levels.

Keywords: Quality, Personnel and Education

Introduction

The Jomtien declaration of 1990 challenged all countries to accord education the priority it deserves to ensure equity for all. It is in recognition of this, that the Nigerian government launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999, which its main aim is to eradicate illiteracy among the Nigerian populace by the year 2015. Education for All (EFA) is a global movement that is coordinated by UNESCO and its aim is to meet the learning needs of all the children, youths and adults by the year 2020.

In recognition of the need for education, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004), posited that education is that process that is concerned with the transmission of worth-while values, skills and knowledge suitable for developing the learner's potentials for national development. Supporting this, Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) noted that the major goal of education in any nation is to prepare its citizens for responsible and productive adult life, so as to be able to function honestly, efficiently and effectively in the society in which they live. There are

therefore people whose duty it is to implement that.

The position of teachers in achieving goals in any educational system cannot be over-emphasized. It is the teacher that translates educational policies into actions. The curriculum and syllabus are not worth than the paper on which they are written without the teacher, whose duty it is to translate the content into action to achieve the desired goals. This implies that the best curriculum can be destroyed by poor quality teaching personnel, while worst curriculum could be made useful and productive by highly qualified teachers.

Teachers are the central nervous system in every educational ventures and this is further underscored by the fact that, just as no country can rise above the level of its educational system, no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers (UNESCO,2005). Teachers are therefore educational engineers and technicians that make things happen in the field of education. Although, in some developed countries such as American, Britain, Japan, France among others, there may be close substitutes for teachers' role in form of teaching machines with programmed instructions. Nonetheless, in the developing countries like Nigeria, teachers remain the sole managers of knowledge (Lassa, 2000).

In his own contribution, Ipaye (2000) posited that despite the rapid advancement in technology, the use of computer in education and the various applications of the Information Technology (IT) in education, the teacher in any part of the world and at any level of education system, is still not replaceable. It is therefore very imperative that quality teaching personnel are needed to achieve quality and functional Education For All by the year 2020.

The Role of Quality Teaching Personnel in Achieving Education For All

The concept 'quality' means standard or excellence. Quality is a distinguishing attribute of a thing, hence quality teaching personnel refers to standard teaching staff, that will enhance the desired and optimum outputs in education. The Jomtien declaration on Education For All is a welcome development, as it addresses basic education for all and also provides a policy direction for all the participating countries to achieve a properly defined benchmark by the year 2020, in providing Education For All – children, youths and adults. According to UNESCO (2002) access to education enables people to participate fully in the economy of the nation and be able to contribute to the nation's development.

However, this laudable intensions by the United Nations cannot be achieved if the right teaching personnel are not employed to handle what goes on in the classroom. Contributing on this, Sabott (2013) opined that it is a wide variety of skills and techniques which experienced teachers use that help to keep the students organized and focused on tasks that are academically productive during class session. In a well managed classroom therefore, students/pupils are engaged intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially and culturally.

In its training manual on Cluster Teacher Professional Development Programme, the Universal Basic Education Commission (2013), posited that, for teaching and learning to be effective, a great deal of creativity/innovation becomes necessary. Creativity is described as an innovation, patent right and independent thoughts. Hence creative teaching is self-developing teaching and techniques which encourages independence of the learner, self exploration and self discovery of the learner both in and outside the school system. The teacher therefore, is at the centre of classroom

management, hence his management and teaching techniques are very vital in achieving success in the business of teaching and learning.

The quality of the teacher is of paramount importance in achieving effective and efficient learning outcome in the recipients of education. For meaningful achievements to be made, government should endeavour to employ and maintain qualified/quality teachers. Most often, laudable educational programmes fail to make landmark because of government inability to consider salient factors that will enhance success in the system. Regrettably, in spite of the prominent position teachers occupy in the business of teaching and learning, government tends to disregard them. Little or no attention is given to their welfare and this often brings about apathy on the part of the teachers, which invariably hampers realization of goal, as mediocres are sometime employed to handle these children.

There is no gain-saying the fact that the destiny of any nation is shaped in the classroom and it is the teacher who is the instrument in moulding that destiny (Ipaye, 2002). The teacher impacts and helps the learner to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them function in the society. The professional competent teacher motivates the children to learn by helping them develop interest in the teaching and learning process. A competent teacher uses instructional materials to teach his learners to enable them understand the lesson better. Ema and Ajayi, (2004) posited that, without the teacher who is knowledgeable, instructional materials cannot create change and progress. According to them, the only time instructional materials begin to make impact in the c children is when the teacher begins to make use of them and allow them to take over their values.

A competent teacher manages the class so well, he knows how best to control the students/pupils deviant behaviour which

otherwise will disrupt teaching and learning process. He illustrates his lesson, asks questions, holds discussions with the students, summarizes and evaluates his lesson in such a way that will enhance better and effective learning. The teacher also gives counselling services to the learners and this helps them in their career choices, and problem solving. All these help in achieving educational goals and making Education For All a reality.

It is very important to note at this juncture, that whether primary, secondary or university level, the teacher is and will continue to be, both a major indicator as well as the major determinant of quality education. The importance of the teacher in any educational venture can therefore not to be underestimated. Stressing on the importance of teachers in achieving national development, Ezewu(1999:9)posited:

“An important sign of long-range health of a nation is the spirit and quality of its teachers. There is no substitute for teachers who are dedicated to their nation... the future of the nation rests in the hands of teachers for the qualities they possess today will inevitably be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow”.

No nation in the world can do without teachers. Since teachers play important role in enhancing national development, it becomes imperative that government should put in place all the necessary machinery that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness in education industry. Government should sponsor seminars, workshops, conferences among others for teachers, to enable them update their knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, government seems to have fallen short of her expectations in these regards. The consequence therefore is apathy on the part of the teachers in their discharge of duties.

There is no doubt that teachers are the focal point in achieving Education for All by the year 2020, because of the important role they play in the teaching and learning process. This suggests that government should take necessary measures to ensure that the right caliber of teachers are employed and maintained, in order to achieve the expected goal. If the teachers are not well cared for /motivated, the tendency is that apathy will set in and this definitely will negate actualization of educational goals.

Identified Teachers' Apathy to Teaching and Learning Process:

Teachers' Apathy can take the following forms:

1. Lateness to work.
2. Inability to conduct the Continuous Assessment tests for the children.
3. Non-marking of scripts and recording students' marks.
4. Inability to plan and write lesson notes.
5. Failure to teach the students at the appropriate time.
6. Unwilling to use instructional materials in the teaching/learning process.
7. Staying in the staff room when the teacher is expected to be in the class teaching.
8. Hawking during school hours.
9. Unwilling to attend to the students' problems (counselling services).
10. Leaving the school without permission.
11. Clocking in early and leaving before the official closing hour among others.

All these have obvious consequences on the learners and if left to continue, will definitely negate actualization of the goals of Education for All by the year 2020 as estimated by the United Nations.

Factors Responsible for Teachers' Apathy to Teaching:

Many scholars have tried to identify some of the causes of apathy among teachers. Ipaye (2002) enumerated the following as the major causes of apathy among teachers:

1. Lack of regular promotion: Promotion is considered as one of the motivational factors that make workers perform, teachers not an exception. It helps to boost the morale of teachers and ginger them to put in their best. Lack of promotion therefore, may lead to low morale and frustration, which invariably affects performance.
2. Poor working conditions: When the conditions of services of any work-force are not pleasing to them, performance is affected. According to Ipaye (2002), teachers endure poor work conditions all over the country. Their pay, allowances and over all remunerations are poor. Teachers' monthly take home salaries and allowances are poor and unattractive worse still, are those in private institutions. Some allowances that were formerly paid to teachers, such as science allowance, house-master allowance among others, seem to have been stopped. Teachers' welfare package is nothing to write home about when compared to their contemporaries in other government parastatals. All these dampen interests and the zeal to work.
3. Lack of opportunities for professional advancement: Teachers show interest in staff development programme such as workshops, seminar, conferences among others, and when all these are not forthcoming apathy sets in.
4. Lack of professionalization of teaching in Nigeria: Teaching has not assumed

its rightful position and status in Nigeria, unlike the medical, legal and other allied professions. Despite the clamour for professionalization of teaching, there are many untrained and unqualified teachers in the school system today especially, in the private-owned institutions. This crop of people go into teaching as a last resort in the absence of any other jobs. The author therefore maintains that, as long as teaching remains so largely in the hands of unqualified and untrained teachers, as long as teachers move from teaching to functionary jobs in government or industries, the image of teaching as a true reward for individual life and a truly significant life of social service, will remain blurred (Ipaye2002:190). Teachers, according to him will continue to show apathy as long as teaching remains unprofessionalized.

5. Poor conditions of infrastructure in the rural areas: Most schools in Nigeria are located in very remote and rural areas where social amenities such as electricity, potable water supply, good roads, relaxation centres, hospitals and recreational facilities are lacking. Most roads in the rural areas are not motorable and teachers have to trek long distances or employ the services of motorcyclists (Okada) to get to their duty posts. The author maintains that until adequate infrastructural facilities are put in place in the rural areas, teachers will continue to show apathy.
6. Inadequate physical facilities in schools: Teachers show more commitment to teaching when they work in a well ventilated classroom, equipped with attractive functional furniture, required books among others. Lack of the required facilities leads to apathy on the part of the teachers.

7. Heavy work load: Most schools are short of teachers especially in some subject areas, such as English language, Sciences, Mathematics, Business studies and so on, with the result that the teachers there are over-utilized without commensurate remunerations.

- 8 Teachers' lack of adequate knowledge: Most teachers stop to update their knowledge as soon as they leave university or other institutions of higher learning. This results to emptiness on their part and the tendency is for them to impart out-dated knowledge which leads to embarrassment by the intelligent students.

Other factors that bring apathy to the teachers according to Ipaye include; the attitude of the government, the society and the school management.

Conclusion.

It is obvious that when the right caliber of teaching personnel (quality teachers) are employed to handle teaching and learning process in the school, effective and efficient goal realization in the Education for All, will be achieved. Furthermore, if the government should as a matter of urgency address these identified factors that impede productivity in the system, the teachers I believe, will bring out the best in them which will make the achievement of Education For All by the year 2020 a reality.

Suggestions on the way forward

1. Government should always endeavour to employ quality and competent teaching personnel, for easy realization of goals of any educational programme.
2. Teachers' welfare packages should be of utmost importance to the government as these serve as motivational strategies to enhance achievement.

3. Government should sponsor teachers to go on conferences, seminars, workshops and other professional meetings to enrich teachers' knowledge and skills in the current educational
 4. Conducive working environment and infrastructural facilities should be put in place.
 5. Finally, promotions, salary increment and other remunerations should be given to teachers as at when due.

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