

THE TEACHER: THE KEY TO ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING QUALITY IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A sound education is the bedrock of development and progress in any society and no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers, the teacher is very significant asset in the educational system. Teachers lead out to the fullest the child's potentialities. These teachers are vital agents for achieving national aspirations, since the quality of education is substantially affected by the quality of teachers available. This paper therefore, seeks to examine "who is a teacher", the quality of a teacher, the concept of Teacher Education. Other area to be examined is the role of the teacher in enhancing quality education. Recommendations were made for example; Teachers Educators should be highly committed to their task.

Keywords: Teacher, Quality Assurance, Education, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been conceptualized as a process which every society uses to preserve and enhance the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its milieu and heritage, to continually uphold the well-being of man and ensures its survival against hostile and destructive elements and forces of man and nature (Nwagwu in Ezeocha 1990). Education is a long-term investment by the society to make itself a better place in which to live. Education therefore, is regarded as a powerful means of achieving progress in all areas of human aspirations and endeavours. It is a great force that can be used to bring about redress and also the greatest investment that the nation can make for rapid development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) recognizes education as the instrument for effecting national integration and fostering the much-needed unity in Nigeria. It is a dynamic instrument of change and the great investment that a nation can make for rapid development. To achieve this, quality Education is imperative only if the objectives of education enshrined in National Policy on Education, especially as the world's is experiencing profound changes. Technological innovations are steadily modifying attitudes, values and ethics and imposing strain and stress upon the family, breaking up population patterns and leading to degradation of the environment. These according to Onyekwelu (1999) in Okoro (2015) can only be handled effectively by a time-tested instrument called teacher.

A sound educational system is the bedrock of human development and progress. It is a known fact that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This proves that teachers play very important roles in any progressive society. Reiterating on the above assertion, Lassa (1996) posited that "it is a settled fact that education is the key to national development" He further argued that, teacher hold the key to sound education, hence only

teachers can maintain quality assurance in education. As education entails teaching and learning, teaching is about knowing what idea is to be communicated while learning on the other hand is the process of acquiring knowledge, attitude and skills through study, experience or being taught. People are schooled to accept a society but they are educated to create or recreate one. Thus, education can be described as becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that ends with reflective action upon it (Offorma, 2016). In his view, Obanga (2002), saw as relevance in education, which he explained as having psychological, socio-political, economic-cultural dimensions. They being the educational personnel and initiator infact the pivotal element in the entire educational development.

WHO IS A TEACHER?

In the traditional Nigerian setting, anybody who had something to teach anytime anywhere was a teacher, depending on the teaching task. He might or might not be paid in kind or cash. The layman's understanding of a teacher emanates from the concept of teaching – for whoever exercise the act of teaching is a teacher just like one may say that he who trades is a trader. On the contrary, Gbamanja (1997) criticized the erroneous belief that anybody can teach as long as he has academic qualification. To him a teacher is someone who underwent and completed in the formal teacher training institution, a planned programme of training among other areas in the principles and practice of education and was exposed to an observed period of training. A teacher is one whose duty is to teach or facilitate the learning process.

Agwu (2015) distinguished a teacher from a professional teacher by defining a professional teacher as the one possessing knowledge and methods that could bring about change and he/she must possess the willingness and ability to change human behaviour Senge (2000) in Agwu and Ogbonnaya-Iduma (2016) also defined a teacher as a person that transmits knowledge that will aid learners in building, identifying and acquiring skills that will equip them for life challenges. It is through learning especially in the education setting that students are prepared for solving problems of the society.

The teachers' role in any society has always been recognized, though, never adequately rewarded. The teacher, according to Awotua-Efebo, (2001) has the potential for enhancing the quality of education by bringing life to curriculum and inspiring students to curiosity and self-directed learning. It is believed that, education unlocks the door of modernization but it is the teacher who actually holds the key, he is the center stage or pivot of the educative process. Ikeobi (1995) argued that the teacher negotiates the meaning of an object, an idea, event or concept with the learner. He is a facilitator of learning. Hoyles 1980 cited in Obi (2017), described the teacher as the representative of society, judge, resource person, helper, ego supporter, group leader, parent surrogate among others. Considering the enormous role the teacher plays in the society, the teacher stands a better chance of promoting quality education and also maintaining the standard of education. Finally, the teacher is one who has at least acquired the minimum academic qualification as stipulated under the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN Act), for effectively & efficiently teaching his/her subjects at the relevant educational level, coupled with the pedagogical training required to help and assist him/her impact appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills to the students.

A teacher is educational personnel who works with learners in order to help them learn. The teacher's roles become one of the most formidable determinants of the quality of education. To perform his role effectively, the teacher must have competent knowledge of his job. Wokocha (2013), indicated that in Nigeria, The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria has the prerogative of determining who a teacher is, the standard of knowledge, skills required to

be a teacher and to raise such standards from time to time. In Nigeria today, the minimum requirement to be a teacher is the possession of the National Certificate in Education (NCE) or Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) (FRN, 2013), Kolawole (2015), observed that, the recruitment of those to be trained as teachers pose a big challenge to teacher preparation in Nigeria. In his observation, he noted that, only those that did not meet admission requirement in other lucrative courses are advised to be transferred to faculties of Education to be trained as teachers. The problem of quality, commitment and competence be set right from admission through training period.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD TEACHER

Educators have suggested various ways of raising the quality of education like reforming, teaching content, improving teaching, equipment, which are no doubt, very necessary but raising the quality of teachers is most critical. Suppose we have the most perfect materials and the most advance teaching equipment, these are going to be used by teachers in improving the quality of teaching. They will become meaningless if teachers themselves do not have good mastering of these or do not know how to delivery these materials to students.

Teachers have to know how to use innovative teaching strategies before they can provide necessary guidance to students concerning classroom activities. The teacher trainers should have this in mind as they prepare the teachers for onward release to the classrooms, thus the success of education is measured in terms of the influence which the teacher has been able to exert upon the minds of the learners. For the teacher to perform his roles, he must possess certain qualities which are largely physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual.

Agwu and Ogbonna-Iduma (2016) identified some qualities a good teacher should possess which will facilitate the realization of the goals of teacher education. These qualities according to them are; good knowledge of the subject lesson plan, passion for students/ job creative lesson delivering, good knowledge of innovative teaching methods among others. To Awotua-Efebo (2001), a good and effective teacher desires to improve his professional qualities by attending conferences, seminars, workshops as well as improving his academic qualification, Gbamanja (1997) also outlined qualities ascribe to a good teacher as:

Good knowledge of the subject matter, good personality, professionalism, ability to understand child psychology, ability to inspire learners, resourcefulness and skills to improve, ability to observe and evaluate.

To Omieibi-Davids (2011), a good teacher must possess the following qualities:

- Good knowledge of the subject matter. This is one major quality a good teacher must possess. He/she must be knowledgeable in the subject matter content, so as to influence students learning.
- Ability to teach effectively. To be able to do this, the teacher must possess a good teaching and communication skills. This will enable him/her teach effectively and communicate well to the students. A good teaching skill will help the teacher select and utilize appropriate methods and materials for effective classroom teaching. A good communication skill on the other hand, will help the teacher communicate clearly and precisely with simple language that will enable the students to understand.
- Resourcefulness and improvisation skill- This is yet another quality which a good teacher need to possess and exhibit. This is because, as a teacher, you cannot improvise except you are resourceful, i.e. The ability to make right decisions when confronted with variety of options, i.e., in terms of what to teach and how to teach it.

THE TEACHER AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education has been regarded by many educators as a programme that must aim at turning out teachers who are intellectually, socially and professionally competent and who possess personal integrity and can teach effectively. Anikweze, Ojo and Maiganga (2002) in their assertion, opined that, viable teacher education programmes should ensure that its products must, apart from being masters of their subjects and of the techniques and skills of teaching, be exposed to the beneficial influences of the humanistic studies especially in the areas philosophy and psychology.

Dike, (2013) asserted that teacher education occupies a unique place in the field of education as an engine room for idea generation, refinement and skill application. Teachers are key actors in the education process and every meaningful reform of education should always pay due attention to teacher factor. Falayoja (1996), in an article “Teacher as the measure” discussed the vitality of the teacher and teacher education programme in his remarks said that development is essential to make sure that qualitative education is established. In other words, many educationists have asserted that, no education system can rise above the quality of its teacher, thus, standards in teacher education becomes critically important in achieving and maintaining quality assurance in education.

The quality and caliber of teachers that service the educational system of a country can serve as an index of development and progress for that country. Ukeje (1995), in agreement said “If the child is the centre of educational system, the teacher is the pivot of the educational process ... for it is the teacher in the final analysis who translate policies into practices and programmes into action”.

Based on the above assertion, there is no doubt, that preparation of teachers for higher productivity is very important for teachers to perform their duties efficiently. Therefore, teachers should be trained adequately and retrained by means of good condition of service comparable to those of their counterparts in the public service.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN ENRICHING QUALITY EDUCATION TEACHER – LEARNER INTERACTION

Teaching–learning process requires certain degree of cordiality between the teacher and the learner to ensure effective communication and comprehension of the concepts taught. Ekwe, (2013) opined that, if for any reason, the teacher is tensed up in the classroom, he may not be able to deliver the materials effectively. The learner on his part needs to perceive the teacher, not as super – intelligent or “known it all” and perfectionist patron but as a caring partner in the learning process. Cordial relationship between the teacher and learner facilitates teaching–learning process, in other words, for teaching to succeed it must be humanistic in orientation. Teachers need increased awareness of the importance and their impact for qualitative education. It is a fact that teachers trained today will educate the unborn generation, therefore, constitutes one of the student’s most essential influences as regards attitudes and relations to oneself, peers, adults, cultural minorities and society as a whole.

Obara (2001), endorsed that teacher’s relationship with the learners in terms of attitude can either facilitate or inhibit qualitative education. He therefore, suggested that the relationship with student’s must be based on efforts to create a positive and acceptable working atmosphere where students can work and develop a confident relationship, where the teacher has empathy in the student’s life situation, motivation and developmental readiness. The

teacher may act as a facilitator in the educational process in listening, accepting, understanding, supporting and reflecting.

EFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES

Teaching involves not only cognitive and manipulative (psychomotor) skills, but also the information of values and attitudes of the learner (affective objective). The teacher also influences positive attitudes of the learner such as: positive and realistic self-concept, self-esteem, self-discovery, motivation, interests, curiosity, intellectual competency, as well as competency in various object areas. This type of objective according to Okoro and Eke (2017) create lasting effects on learning, such as positive attitudes towards learning and intellectual and social competency needed for the retention of learning. Also, the teacher's knowledge of the components of a well stated instructional objectives will help in enriching quality instruction vis-à-vis quality education.

Dike (2006), defined instructional objectives as a statement that specifies the behaviour(s) expected of learners at the end of instruction as evidence that learning has occurred. To him, for the teacher to effectively and efficiently contribute in enhancing quality education his or her knowledge of the component of a well stated instructional objective is a sinquanon. He represented it with the A B C D acronym, where:

The "A" represents the audience, i.e. the receiver or beneficiary of the instruction.

The "B" represents the behaviour, i.e., that which prescribes or represents what the Learners should be doing at the end or by the end of the lesson, and it is normally stated in "action verbs".

The "C" represents the condition i.e., the resource materials needed for effective teachings and

The "d" represents the degree, i.e., the accepted level of performance needed for certification.

THE TEACHER AND COMMUNITY

For the educational outcomes to be relevant to social needs, learning must be linked with community activities, values, attitudes and life styles. The teacher's role as an intermediary to link schools with community becomes very crucial. Thus the educational contents, values and attitudes taught in school should be fruitfully linked to those prevailing in society, also new knowledge, attitudes and innovations which have transformation effect should be introduced into society through the school. Therefore, teacher education programmes must be designed in such a way that teachers can keep abreast of recent developments and develop more favourable attitudes and understanding towards community work.

TEACHER SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The teacher is the main agent who can organize and influence students learning experiences and outcomes. Teacher's influence on the learner seems substantial as he/she has direct contact and communication with the learner in everyday teaching. The quality and qualification of teachers, their knowledge and understanding of the interactive process with the learners greatly affects the quality of education. Therefore, teacher education programmes should be organized in such a way as to accommodate multi-disciplinary course.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Awotua-Efebo (2001), identified preparation, execution and evaluation as the major components of effective teaching. Preparation, to him entails-statements of objectives, content and learning experiences selection amongst others. The execution stage entails proper

lesson delivering through the use of appropriate instructional methods and instructional resources and finally, the evaluation stage includes test, assignment and examination administration which in turn will help in taking decisions. And so, a teacher knowledge of this as part of his/her role will go a long way towards enhancing quality education.

TEACHING METHOD

Teaching method being very important aspect of the teaching process through which knowledge, skills, attitude, values, ability among others are transferred to the learner, occupy a prime place in education. Teaching method must therefore be reviewed and updated periodically to ensure that new methods in dynamic process of education are utilized.

Ekwe (2013), noted such methods like simulation project method and inquiry/discovery methods which stimulate analysis, critical thinking, experimentation, skills in working democratically initiative inquiry, these are highly commended unlike the traditional approaches which emphasize rote memorization and indoctrination.

Finally, evaluation and follow-up studies in education are necessary and valuable for the educational system, the teacher, the student and family. Educational process needs realistic evaluation as it is a point of contact for the teacher and citizens as teachers evaluate learners, so learners should be given the opportunity to evaluate teachers.

The teacher knowledge of who he/she (learner) is teaching, what they are learning i.e. (objectives) and where they are learning (environment) will help in enhancing quality instructional delivery, hence quality educations. Also, the teachers ability to effectively and efficiently combine variety of instructional strategies will help enhance quality instruction and education respectively. This is true because, no one teaching method or strategy has all it takes to evoke the three domains of man, i.e in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude acquisition.

Equally, the teachers knowledge of such innovative teaching strategies like, enter-educates, i.e the use of entertainment in the teaching learning process, future wheel- letting your learners understand the future consequences of some of the actions they take today i.e examination malpractice amongst others, will in no small measure enrich their instructional delivery capacity, hence a road map to quality education.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of all that has been discussed above on “The Teacher: the key in Achieving and Maintaining Quality Assurance in Education, some recommendations are proffered to boost the quality of teachers and education.

Firstly, teacher-education programmes have to be reviewed to include comprehensive content to meet the future challenges of the society. Secondly, since no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers it becomes pertinent that teacher-educators should be highly committed to their task. Hence, students and peers assessment of the teacher educators are recommended. Thirdly, teachers should have professional skills and be able to deliver knowledge adequately to students.

Also, teacher should establish good relationship with other teachers, students, parents and the community in which the teach because students development will not just rely upon the one

teacher, but upon common and coordinated efforts of many teachers' parents and the community members at large.

CONCLUSION

It may be important for educators to pay more attention to learning outcomes and the learning process in attempt to improve the quality of education. The teacher's role in this area is of utmost important. Teacher's understanding of themselves, their skills, knowledge and influence of their attitude and personality upon the learners may be very importance. Indeed, teachers are required not to only to be knowledge providers but also artists and psychologist who are aware of how to communicate with, and relate to the learners. The quality of teacher training programmes plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of teachers and education.

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