

Equipping the Nigerian Career Teacher For Improved Service Delivery in a Contemporary Globalized Society.

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ABSTRACT.

This paper examined the qualities, practice and role of the career teacher in the quest for sustainable development in Nigeria. The conditions under which the career teacher carry out his functions were examined in line with global context in a fast changing society. The teacher have been functional, but potentials of the average Nigerian career teacher have not been fully explored and utilized owing to myraid of problems including poor working conditions and environment, job insecurity, poor societal value on the teacher with little motivation. The Nigerian teacher works solely on self motivation and passion for the job and or as a last resort owing to lack of other alternatives. Societal, personal and students expectations keep them going to evade been blamed on poor performance. Suggestions are that, there should be improved working conditions and enviroment, motivational strategies, continuous retraining and professionaliztion, proper funding of teacher education, ethics and attitude training, constant evaluation of teaching learning activities with child centred teaching rather than examination centred.

Keywords: Career, Teacher, improved, traininig, functional.

Introduction.

Every society is interested in the socialization of it's members to enable them become functional members of society through the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. Socialization of members of society is a priority to all, the process of education which is globally acknowledged as an instrument par excellence to national development. Education encompasses the leading out of potentials of the individuals, acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies necessary for self realization, preparing the individual to cope with challenges of his environment and contribute to the taming of society for the benefit of man. This is the primary objective of education in agreement with GOD's directive for man to subdue the earth. This requires a change agent, the teacher that plans, motivate, direct, control and evaluates the activities of the individuals that are to be socialized.They (teachers) hold the 'axis' upon which the world of education rotates, (managers of knowledge). An attestation to the statement that " *no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers*"(NPE; 2004), and 'no education for all without teachers for all'.

All over the world, a quality education offers hope and the promise of a better standard of living. However, there can be no quality education without competent, equipped, prepared and motivated teachers. While the Nigerian teacher has the required cognitive ability and passion, the level need to be beefed up in terms of pedagogical skills, teaching methodology, attitude, and work ethics, responsibilities, conducive working environment and required working tools. This paper therefore is anchored on the extent, Nigerian teachers are equipped to perform their functions, how they have been performing and the chalenges hindering their effectiveness.

Teaching, teachers and their roles/functions.

Teaching is the act of instructing and directing for a desired goal, and the individual involved in the instructing or directing is the teacher who is officially contracted. Broadly the function of teachers is to help students learn by imparting knowledge to them and setting up a situation in which learners learn to learn effectively. The teacher is a manager and an administrator who is involved in planning, deciding, controlling, motivating and evaluating the activities within the classroom environment. A class teacher is the primary organizer of educational work in schools, who mediates the society and the developing personalities of school children in their learning about the cultural foundations of humankind, manages relations between all elements of the educational process, creates optimal psychological climate in classrooms, co-ordinates joint efforts of teachers, family and society, organizes daily life of children, and is an important role model in individual development of a child.

For professional competence, successful and effective realization of their duties, class teachers ought to be familiar with the psychological and pedagogical basics of working with children of specific age, be informed about the latest advancements in form ofs of methods of educational work, know and use modern educational technologies. The central element of the class teacher professionalism is his or her professional psychological – pedagogical competence, the understanding of the complexity of personality, ability to analyze interaction of school children with the world and manifestations of the school children's interpersonal relations with other

people. The present day teacher is expected to be the adaptor, the communicator, the learner, the visionary, the leader, the model, the collaborator and the risk taker.

Their functions include;-

- Teaching children to read, write, do mathematics, and much more, using games, videos, computers, and other tools to teach children different subjects.
- Showing students' skills explain information and plan lessons before teaching.
- Making lessons easy to understand. Teach things in different ways for different learners to learn in the way that is easiest for them, assign homework and class projects. They often have students work together to do projects. When students are not doing well, plan schedules for the day.
- Assigning homework and class projects. make students work together to do projects, grade papers and projects, create tests, write students' report cards, and meet with parents to try to help children do better in school.

But teachers fill a complex set of roles, which vary from one society to another and from one educational level to another. Some of these roles are performed in the school and community as mediator of learning, disciplinarian or controller of student behaviour, parent substitute, confidant to students, judge of achievement, organizer of curriculum, bureaucrat, scholar and research specialist, member of teachers' organization, public servant, surrogate of middle-class morality, expert in some area of knowledge or skills, community leader and agent of social change Most teachers are role models to their students. That, on its own, is enough responsibility. Teachers play a very important part in education, thus they're found accountable to not only the students but also the students' parents, the teaching profession, their employer, their colleagues, the community and the society. Teachers mold the society; no teachers mean no doctors, engineers, or other professions.

The Career Teacher.

The teacher generally is an individual that instructs, directs, coach, train, lectures etc. By this definition, it implies that every person is a teacher; we are instructing, teaching and/or directing others or others are to us, an activity that occurs regularly in our daily routine of activities. While all are teachers, yet there are two types of teachers, the ordinary human being as a teacher and the career teacher who is paid for teaching. Our concern is the career teacher that is employed in our educational institutions, private or public. The career teacher is also of two types, the professional and the non-professional. The professional teacher is the one that has undergone the professional training and has a qualification in education as a discipline, while the nonprofessional is the one that does not have training in education as a discipline but is employed to teach. Most of these nonprofessionals found themselves teaching to enable them survive as summarized by Edward Braithwaite;

*'I did not become a teacher out of any sense of vocation;
mine was no considered decision in the interests of
youthful humanity or the spread of planned education.
It was a decision forced on me by the very urgent need to eat'*

Braithwaite (1996)

Teaching as a career share some professional characteristics such as process of formal training, body of specialized knowledge, procedure for certifying, or validating, membership in the profession, and sets of standards of performance, intellectual, practical, and ethical that is defined and enforced by members of the profession.

Career professional teachers are expected to possess qualities such as

- **Enthusiasm.** Having and never losing enthusiasm for their profession and not burdened by administrative hassles.
- **Knowledge of subject matter.** Been an expert in his/her field(s) and the continuous building of the understanding of their subjects throughout their careers.
- **Empathy/Maturity.** Ability to bond with learners, understand and resonate with their feelings and emotions, communicate on their level and be compassionate with them when they are down and to celebrate with them when they are up, being in their world.
- **Positive Mental Attitude.** Been able to think more on the positive than the negative. Keeping a smile on your face and seeing the bright side of things seeking to find the positives in every negative situation and being philosophical, objective and optimistic.

- *Open to change.* Ability to acknowledge that, the only real constant in life is change. Acknowledging the place for tradition and a place for new ways, new ideas, new systems, and new approaches, without obstacles in willing to listen to others' ideas.
- *Role Model.* Being a window through which many young people see their future.
- *Creative.* Motivating learners by using creative and inspirational methods of teaching, different in approaches that make him unique.
- *Sense of Humor.* Exhibiting a sense of humor that reduces barriers and lightens the atmosphere especially during heavy periods among learners. An ability to make students laugh will carry you far, using ice-breakers.
- *Presentation Skills.* Knowing and understanding learners physical and psychological needs, thus creating presentation styles to suit their needs. Keeping positive body language regularly.
- *Calmness.* Calm in the midst of aggression, negative attitudes and behaviors from learners, colleague's and others, but helping them de-stress
- *Respectful.* Knowing that no one is more important in the world than anyone else, that everyone has a place and knowledge to offer in the world.
- *Inspirational.* Making a change by helping learners to realize their potentials, helping them to grow, discovering and harnessing their talents, skills and abilities.
- *Passion.* Passionate about your job and duties with a purpose to make a difference.
- *Willingness to Learn.* Willing to learn from other teachers and students. Although knowledgeable in his subject but never stop learning.

The Nigerian career teacher is saddled with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum aimed at enabling learners acquire scientific and technological skills, inculcation of value orientation, civic and moral responsibility as well as good family living, acquisition of skills of poverty eradication and laying the foundation for knowledge and application of ICT (NERDC; 2008) in tandem with the nations philosophy of education, consisting of

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational systems.
- Encourage further the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers.
- Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitments to national goals.
- Produce teachers with the intellectual and Professional background adequate for their assignments and make them adaptable to changing situation and
- Enhance teacher's commitment to teaching.

.Nigerian career teachers possess some basic characteristics that have enabled them carry out their duties favourable in a globalized setting. This includes academic competence/qualification with more than seventy five percent meeting the basic professional requirement of a teacher. This cut across the three tiers of primary, secondary and tertiary. Another is passion, which has kept him going irrespective of the unfriendly, non-motivating physical and social environment in which he carries out the noble job of reforming and transforming the young ones. Physically the classrooms are well structured with some dilapidated, though the teacher socially not recognized, appreciated or encouraged, but rather blamed for learners poor achievement and loss of societal values. He improvises instructional materials. The Nigerian teachers that constitute about sixty percent (60%) of government employed labour force are the only ones that are expected to deliver without appropriate and enough working tools. But upon these they have lived up to expectations working under harsh conditions with at times their rights of monthly wages denied and/or paid late. They are the only categories of workers that employers owe salaries.

Teachers and National Development.

In the present day globalized dynamic society, where nothing is stagnant, education is not an exception with new pedagogical approaches, instructional materials, school cultures, classroom ecology, school plants and curriculum content that are designed to reflect the nation's goals. In an era of electronic activities dominating the activities of human beings, teachers are also expected to play their assigned and assumed roles well. The concept and objectives of education is shifting with stakeholders emphasizing on basic education consisting of learning how to learn and the acquisition of life coping skills as reflected in the EFA goals and MDG. All this requires the

teacher as the fulcrum of to perform his duties effectively and being resourceful. Resourcefulness is the effective identification, selection, procurement and use of teaching/learning resources to enhance achievement, a benchmark for assessing teacher effectiveness. Two key indices that are used to measure the greatness of a nation is its material and human resources. Human beings build a nation by harnessing material resources. Teachers are functions of human development index through their duties as trainers of tomorrow leaders. Teachers work in close co-ordination with students to help them in building their future. They mold the students to bring out their skills, teach them good habits/attitudes and helping them become good citizens of a nation. Since childhood is the father of manhood/adulthood that develops through the stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, with refining, skilled and tooling for functionality by the teacher. The content of a nation's educational curriculum forms the shadow of the nation's future, represented by the youth that has to be socialized for transition into nation builders. One of the most important aspects of any society is the younger generation; they represent the future and the direction that society will take. Teachers enrich the young generation to save the future; A teacher determines the quality of citizens of a nation.

It is the teacher that inculcates the habits of honesty, hard work and fear of God in a child. At school the child is taught to be obedient to rules and regulations, respect for elders and the laws of the nation, to appreciate the value of unity, culture, and traditions of his nations. A nation overall philosophy is inculcated in to its citizens in the school with the teacher doing the job. It is the teacher that produces the leaders of a nation. They therefore play a cardinal role in the building up of character of the next generation. It is a fact that civilization cannot rise out of a skeleton of mere ideas and abstract concepts, but find a concrete shape in the practical behaviour of a nation base on principles and concepts propagated within the schools.

Challenges of the Nigerian Teacher.

The working environment under which the Nigerian teacher works is not free from challenges. They could be teacher factors (wages, qualification, personality traits, etc.), school factors (infrastructure, physical environment, school resources, consumables and non-consumables etc.), and community factors (government policies and legislations, social status and professionalization, funding etc.). The challenges of the Nigerian teacher include.

- *Poor welfare.* Nigerian teachers irrespective of the level are poorly remunerated and yet taxed. The controversy of TSS (Teachers Salary Structure) is glaring, an allowance called, " salary structure", yet implementation is a problem. Some are yet to implement, while some went on strike before implementation. Teachers do not enjoy other benefits except the monthly salaries, and not paid regularly.
- *Inadequate teaching resources.* Instructional material, libraries and laboratories and other facilities needed for effective teaching are inadequate. Classrooms are not equipped with modern teaching aids and gadgets.
- *Insecure social environment.* The social environment of the present day Nigeria is not safe for the teacher to function properly. The job of character refining and molding is threatened owing to cult activities and other social vices with parents not supporting, rather against the teachers role of reforming character.
- *Intimidation and bullying.* Teachers in Nigeria faces regular intimidation from employers and managers, whom, in most cases are not professionals,. Threats of sack, demotion, withholding of wages are common place, making the teacher to carry out his duties with tension.
- *Non-professionalization and administrative negligence.* Non recognition and treatments as professionals, with the sector doors open to 'quacks' is demoralizing the Nigerian teacher.
- *Dearth in knowledge upgrade and training.* Non training and upgrade of teachers' knowledge employers and managers is impeding the effectiveness and reducing the quality of products.
- *Overloaded curriculum.* The designed curriculum and activities required to be accomplished by teachers and learners with the short time available constitute a major challenge. This has affected the teacher ethics, with some looking for a safe landing (examination centered and malpractice.)

Recommendations.

- There should be 'symbiotic collaboration' between government and other stakeholders rather than 'parasitic collaboration' to improve the working environment, provision of working tools and modern teaching gadgets with improved conditions of service.

- Continuous retraining of teachers should be carried regularly to improve their pedagogical skills and knowledge, attitude and work ethics.
- Regular evaluation of the sector aimed at improvement, redirection of stakeholders (parents teachers, learners, managers) and reorientation against “the end justifying the means”.
- Increased funding of teacher education and provision of modern training facilities to improve effectiveness.

Conclusion.

An equipped teacher is a trained professional who leads by example through his thoughts and actions. One who possesses the humility to accept the need to rediscover and reinvent himself as and when necessary in addressing the inquisitiveness of his learners. He has the capacity to mentor learners in removing the disconnect between the abstract world of theories and the realities of lives problems with a commitment to educate. Teachers have not been properly equipped for their duties, thus we need to move away from the old order of neglecting he whom we expect to lay the foundation of our better tomorrow, expecting him to transform and equip society yet he himself is not equipped. Nigerian teachers should therefore be equipped so that they can be truthful, encouraging, available, creative, hopeful, enthusiastic and ready to carry out their functions as builders of tomorrow’s leaders.

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