

# The Teacher and the Universal Basic Education in Cameroon, Constraints and the Way Forward

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## Abstract

The Universal Basic Education in Cameroon is aimed at, inter-alia, acquisition of the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying of a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The school is a vital social institution that promotes occupational socialization and transmission of culture among learners. Teachers are the facilitators in this process. The thrust of this paper is to explore the faceted role of teachers in child upbringing, highlight the many problems they face in Cameroon while executing their onerous tasks and then advise on the way forward. Teachers are instructors, socialization agents, curriculum planners and leaders. They are constantly facing professional challenges of deciding what the students should learn and what schools should teach yet they; the paper points out have a very low social status in Cameroon, are subjected to horrible working conditions, poor incentives which climax in self condemnation. The paper then recommends that "The Teacher characteristics Study" be conducted regularly, a code of conduct be put in place for teachers adequate motivation be given and facilities for effective teaching and learning be put in place in Cameroonian schools ensuring the success of UBE.

**Keywords:** curriculum planners, code of conduct facilities and motivation and constraints

## INTRODUCTION

The concept and aim of the UBE as envisaged by the government of Cameroon came through law No. 98/004 of 4<sup>th</sup> April 1998. Banya (2010) observed that:

The Universal Basic Education.... is almost the Same as the old scheme .It is "free "and universal like before, but now it will be compulsory. But having carefully reviewed the various nations' administration the world over have decided to give it a broader focus. Thus, the new UBE now extends to all children from age 6 to 13.It accommodate them from primary to junior secondary school...depending on the financial ability of state for properly equipping the schools ( Obanya,p.4) The UBE implementation Guideline brought about the specific objectives of UBE include:

- a. developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion
- b. The provision of free ,universal basic education
- c. Reduction drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal system.
- d. Catering for the learning needs of young person who ,for one reason or another ,have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education ;and
- e. Ensuring the acquisition of the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying of a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The school is a vital social institution ;a relatively permanent and ubiquitous social system which performs essential functions on a continuous basis in the wider possesses such as location , building, teachers, a curriculum and a group of pupils but in the purpose for possesses such as location , building, teachers, a curriculum and a group of pupils but in the purpose for establishing it i.e. to provide teaching and learning and consequently produce educated person possesses such as location , building, teachers, a curriculum and a group of pupils but in the purpose for learning and establishing it i.e. to provide teaching and consequently produce educated person.

Thus, the purpose of schooling is to gain or bank knowledge and qualifications. Knowledge then becomes the property of the individual. The teacher is that person who deliberately employs various rational approaches in trying to persuade someone else to change his behavior in a specific direction. He is someone with special knowledge, aptitude and values thus, acting as a mediator between the learner and what is learnt.

This unquestionably, makes a teacher an agent of Nurture. Nurture is education, training and care given with particular emphasis on development. In the school setting, this involves a strong emotional attachment between a teacher and the learners put in his care. Teachers therefore cater for needs, interests, motivations and the drives of learners under them. As agents of the quality of instruction at all levels which has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

1. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and Human relations
2. Shared responsibility for the common good of society, and
3. Respect for the dignity of labour

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### CURRICULUM PLANNERS

Before independence, curriculum was planned by the colonial masters in African countries where their influence was felt. The curricula were more of foreign to Africans in general in and Cameroon in particular. For UBE to succeed in Cameroon, there is need for Education to be revolutionized and revitalized. It implies that education set back in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general should be revamped for quality education. This call for curriculum redesigning or planning. Quality Education can be achieved if the teachers who are in the system are brought to the forefront in the redesigning and planning a new curriculum for education in Cameroon. The teacher is the hub which any country's system of education revolves. First of all, the teacher has to understand both the package of the curriculum and its processes. The package refers to the curriculum contents or what it contains, while the processes refer to what should be done to make a curriculum achieve its objectives. Eya (1999) points out that "no meaningful decision concerning the curriculum can be properly taken in isolation of the teacher" (p.18). Obanya (2010) remarks that the UBE curriculum should be from holistic nature to a special one. This means that it should be a curriculum that carries everyone along enterprising, reinforcing capacity for sustained, and high quality pursuit of development of Education. The role of the teacher in cooperative learning becomes predominantly that of a planner and facilitator of active learning. Cooperative learning is a structured instructional strategy which emphasizes active learning through interpersonal interaction, pupils acts as partners with the teacher and each other. Curriculum constitute culture of the people, universal culture and special culture. Since Education For All (EFA) leads to UBE Therefore planners have to borrow ideas which are relevant from developed nations hence is global village to include those aspects so that the crops of these new product of UBE may integrated internationally.

### CODE OF CONDUCT

This constitute the principles or behavior attached to a Profession. Teaching is a profession like law. Those in this profession have a conduct or behaviour. These principles are the guidelines which helps them to perform their functions creditably so as to achieve the predetermine goals of school. In this vein, be it in Cameroon, will succeed if the teachers maintain decorum i.e. upholding their professional ethics of teaching and learning. A teacher is a leader i. e. someone who occupies a position in a group; influences others according to the role expectation for that position; coordinates and directs the group in maintaining itself and reaching its goals. The personality of the teacher is a significant variable in the classroom. The "right" combination of teacher's personality traits, attitudes and background characteristics on the part of the teacher will enable him to provide the "right" kinds of learning experiences for his pupils. Thus, Ashley, Cohen and Slatter (1969) submit that:

The teacher by adopting a particular style of leadership in the classroom will, in all probability, get very difference responses from his pupils. These different responses

are likely to have an effect on the children's  
motivation to learn ,and the quality of the  
children's work, plus their general feeling of  
well-being as a member of the class,(p.131).

## **FACILITIES**

Facilities constitute buildings ,services, equipment and artifacts' that are provided for a particular purpose(Hornby,2001p.415). Facilities include those

equipment known as instructional materials. They help for effective teaching and learning .These instructional materials are necessary ingredients in

the development of schools. According to Esu(1995),ordinary word of verbalization have been Known to be inadequate for effective teaching and learning process because it has failed to deliver the needed objectives instruction in schools .These facilitate

the acquisition and evaluation of knowledge and skills.

The lack of these essential infrastructures in the

development of UBE in Cameroon seem acute . This

may affect the objectives of EFA by 2015 and may crippled the programme because no proper teaching and leaning can take place in unconducive environment. For example, there is acute shortage of buildings designed as classrooms for effective teaching and learning for both pupils and teachers . Apart from building inadequacy, there is a deficiency in other infrastructures such as seats, libraries , textbooks and artifacts .

Most of the buildings are dilapidated and not fit for teaching and learning.

Furthermore, there is need of textual materials (the prints), the non-textual materials for teachers to deliver their lessons to the pupils. It is the duty of those saddled with the responsibility to provide them . The non-textual materials may not be textbooks only but are materials that can be combined with the proper use of textbooks to provide richness in learning experience. These non-textual materials include: audios, visuals, audio-visuals, phenomenal and over-head projectors. Since the teacher facilitates learning , it is pertinent to employ these instructional materials to concretize the ideas and so as to stimulate the learner's imagination. It equally keeps the learners busy and active thus increasing their participation in the lesson .However, education is child –centered, it is therefore their role to discover what they want so as to contribute in future in national development, hence the role of the teacher remains that of instructor and a facilitator .It implies that, a well equipped classroom with all the learning

accessories motivates , increases and improves teaching and learning processes. It implies that teaching and learning is facilitated by the facilities discussed hitherto. In this process of teaching and leaning, the teacher socializes with the It pupils .implies that he transmits the societal cultural values, norms and patterns of behavior. Teachers should be motivated because they epitomizes the society. In the words of Nwa-chil(1991) , he submits that:

The teacher epitomizes society per excellence,

He represents a model personality that

should be copied . He is a leader who must

be obeyed ,an interpreter of a great moral

ideas of his society and a important idol for a

many a child. A class teacher attached

permanently to a class is more of a father  
a friend, a direct representative of authority than  
an instructor (p.160).

## MOTIVATION

Motivation is derived from the latin word “movere”, meaning “to move” one to a higher position in terms of services rendered. It is the complex forces,

drives, needs tension states, or mechanisms that start and maintain voluntary activity directed toward the achievement of personal goal (Hoy&Miskel,1987) cited in Peretomode (2010).It implies that teachers who are at the helm of teaching and learning should be motivated in all ramifications. They do not teach only but plan what to teach especially at this time of transforming the curriculum to meet the goals and globalization or universal integration. Apart from satisfying the objectives in this of EFA for globalization their need disposition, they should be recognized and given responsibility which may earn them self-actualization.

Every worker or employee needs Maslow (1943) need hierarchy such as physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, ego or esteem needs and self-actualization needs. The essence of seeking employment is to satisfy one's dispositions first then those of the organization. Once the worker (i.e. teacher) idiographic is met, he will see to it that the school's nomothetic philosophy is projected. Herzberg (1968) two-factor motivation are classified into hygiene factors made of environment, pay, status, security, supervision, fringe benefits, working conditions, policies and administrative practices, interpersonal relations with superiors and subordinates portray that whether they are in the work place or not, work will continue. These needs are known as dissatisfiers. This seem the treatment teachers in the present dispensation in most African countries including Cameroon. The situation need to be improved in Cameroon in particular and in African countries generally hence this is the period that teachers should be most utilized. It implies that Herzberg motivation factor( i. e. job satisfiers) are necessary so as elevate teachers ego in the country in order to be effectively be involve in the re designing of the new curriculum in the country's UBE and to take effective. Part in teaching and learning The motivational factors of Herzberg known as satisfiers include meaningful and challenging work, recognition for accomplishment, opportunities for growth and advancement, feeling of achievement and the job itself.

## CONSTRAINTS

Constraints are those elements which cause restrictions on one's ability, freedom, financial programmes and/or economic advancement. They may be caused by poverty due to present or previous political upheavals in a country hence no meaningful progress can be achieved in a state of anarchy. Constraints may be caused by the pressure of numbers of illiteracy in the country especially the numbers of children of school going-age. The need to act quickly which Cameroon in particular and other African countries generally, have to catch up quickly with the rest of the world,(i.e. the problem) if not tackled will worsen and EFA that is, quality basic education for ALL is an imperative to be achieved by the 2015;severely limited resources in the country competing with many other

sector of human development(health services, security, agriculture, roads, transport services etc). Furthermore threat of wars, internal conflicts; political uncertainties the prevalence of fledging democracies; famine; flood and other natural disasters; HIV/AIDS; multitudes of refugees and internally displaced persons. Another constraint is the debt burden of various forms and the relief of recent years if it has made any meaningful impact on the financial sanity of Cameroon in particular and in most African countries in general, hence that heavy debt-servicing burdens and deteriorating foreign exchange rate have contributed to poverty rate of the country. Rapid population growth makes projections and forward planning difficult and further compounding the problem of challenge of large number of persons needing basic education in Cameroon. Globalization of Cameroon is yet to become the elixir hence it is not supposed that Cameroon and other African countries have entered into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with huge educational and developmental deficit hence; the dazzling pace of change in international scene; the rapid influx of new ideas and products which Cameroon and other African countries ill-preparedness or not prepared to contribute to the world pool of ideas and products. The acute shortage of skills in the Education sector such as managers, teachers, materials development, modern instructional materials for teaching and learning, conducive environment for teaching and learning at a time when Cameroon and the rest Africa is brains and brawns to the industrialized countries, hence the severe economic and political problems(Obanya, 2010). From these criteria of the constraints, Cameroon seem to have embraced UBE partially as revealed in

article, captioned “Cameroon Nation Struggles With universal Education”(http://allafrica.com/stories/201309030307).

To cope with this situation of financing UBE so as to meet the accepted year of 2015, the Government should involve different avenues of accruing revenue such as a Education Tax from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Company Tax, and the society. Another way to accrue funds for UBE, is to appeal for funds from well-placed members of the society who see education as the Bed-rock of development. Special Appeal Funds should be sent to Developed Nations of the world. Some of these developed nations have the means to help either in cash or kind. It implies that they can give fiscal cash or materials. This method will protect the country from heavy debt –servicing and severe poverty as well as brain drain.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Teachers are the path-finders in education matters. In this case, they know the cause of curriculum development or matters concerning improvement of

especially of Basic Education (U. B.) in Cameroon. It implies that they should be responsible in handling curriculum re-designing to suit the new dispensation of science and technology. Herzberg (1968) outlines those principles of motivational factors or job satisfiers. In this way, the teachers will put in those elements or instructional materials required. However, they should be given adequate re-training to up-date their knowledge and skills in handling education of these new breeds of basic education, they (new breeds) are those the country looks forward for national and world-wide representatives in the future. It means that no meaningful decision concerning curriculum should be taken in isolation of teachers. From all indications, the state of UBE vary from country to country. In this circumstance, Cameroon may start with primary education and gradually progress to secondary education. This may be according to her ability, since other factors of human development are in threshold. The principles of UBE development in each country is depended on individual state of financial ability. It implies that Cameroon being an underdeveloped nation is perhaps on the right track. The essence of UBE implementation is to develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education. It means creating awareness for people to be literate by 2015. This process of implementing UBE cannot take place anywhere else except in a school setting prepared for teaching and learning. It implies that the environment should be conducive for effective educational activities so that the learners may gain knowledge and qualifications for the individuals and the society at large. It should be re-emphasized that the teacher occupies a better place in educating the young ones, since he teaches, coordinates and evaluates the learners, therefore his role is exclusively important in issues concerning education of the leaders of tomorrow.

In other words, he should be involve line-hock and sinker in Basic Education in Cameroon. For Basic Education (UB) to be successful in Cameroon, adequate infrastructures are required. These embody:

Conducive learning environment ( buildings), including libraries, textbooks, phenomenals, projectors, and instructional materials. These facilities will improve effective teaching and learning. Since teachers are the prime movers of any Educational System (SE), they should be encouraged by motivating with incentives, promotions, responsibilities, recognition, and in-service training to acquire more methodologies and skills. However, Cameroon is an under-developed country struggling with her lean financial resources chasing different and many human development, should bite what she can chew in terms of implementing UBE. It means that many hands should be on deck in terms of accruing funds for Basic Education in Cameroon. Some of the ways envisaged may include: appealing or craving for funds from NGOs; well-placed members of the society; Education Tax Funds (ETF) should be launched nation-wide and appeal for funds from Developed Nations of the world should be scheduled because they have and would be willing to give to the less privileged/under-developed countries in the world. An office for statistics be set up independent of Ministry of Basic Education for projection of pupils – teachers’ ratio. This will reduce wastage and encourage permanent recruitment or employment of teachers and also avoid contract or part-time teachers for efficiency and effectiveness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, the following recommendations are made or deduced:

Teachers should be involved in curriculum re –designing. This will motivate them and promote their code of conduct or attitudes towards their profession.

Government should source for funds by appealing to NGOs; Government should procure infrastructures such as buildings conducive for teaching and learning or for learning environment; others accessories like print and non-print materials for effective teaching and learning. from well-placed members of the society ; from our friends of Developed Nations of the world and Education Tax Fund (ETF) should be launched nation-wide. from well-placed members of the society ; from our friends of Developed Nations of the world and Education Tax Fund (ETF) should be launched nation-wide.

Government should promote teachers when due motivate them in terms, of incentives in-service training to booster their ego for effectiveness and efficient performance so as to achieve the aims and objectives of UBE in Cameroon.

## CONCLUSION

Base on the recommendations, the study is concluded as follows:

Teachers should be given adequate responsibilities since they are professionals in the field. It has been so in every part in the world that professionals of any discipline or profession are always given an opportunity to develop their curriculum in time of change for improvement. If the manpower is inadequate ,more teachers should be recruited who have the flair .In this way their code of conduct is projected and maintained.

Adequate infrastructures should be procured or supplied so as to achieve the objective of wiping away illiteracy in Cameroon by 2015. These infrastructures include: classrooms which are conducive for teaching and learning, accessories for effective teaching and learning ( print and non- print materials) etc.

Government should give Education especially the Basic Education a priority in her budgetary allocation so that the 2015 could be achieved successfully.

Government should source for funds by appealing to NGOs; well-placed members of the society; from friends of Cameroon of Developed Nations of the world and Education Tax Fund (ETF) should be launched Nation -wide.

A statistical office should be set up independently of the Ministry of Basic Education . It should be responsible for analyzing enrolment of pupils-teacher ratio in the country to avoid wastage and encourage permanent or full-time employment/recruitment of teachers instead of contract teachers who psychologically are demoralized in terms of employment conditions

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