

The Teacher Factor: A Major Challenge in the Management of Education for Environmental Security

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Abstract

Education is considered as a viable tool for developing human capacities and capabilities towards eliminating threats that may make the environment secured. The teacher as the implementer of the school curriculum is central in achieving the aims and objectives of using education as a tool for inculcation into the learner, knowledge, skills and attitude that will lead to preserving the environment thereby ensuring security. This paper highlights the need for environmental education as a necessity for preventing threats that pose problems to the environment. The paper outlines a number of human activities that may damage the environment and create security problems. It was recommended among other things that effective management of education must be given emphasis at all levels and teacher preparation programmes must be strengthened in order to produce an effective teacher for our school system.

Introduction

Education has played a key role in the transformation of societies across the world. Knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired through the process of education have contributed in finding solutions to man's problems. The contemporary society today presents such problems and issues expressed in what is now popularly known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One of such MDGs is Environmental sustainability. The achievement of the MDGs hinges on effective utilization of education as a deliberate strategy to harness its potentials in the transformation of the society today.

One of the aims of education at the primary school level as stated in the national policy on education; Federal Republic of Nigeria. (FRN, 2004, P.14) is to "develop in the child ability to adapt to the child's changing environment". In addition, the policy document stipulates that

"the child should be given the opportunity to develop manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limit of his capacity (FRN, 2004.P.14).

At the tertiary level, one of the aims of education is the development of the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and international environment and security problems that must be tackled for continued survival of man on earth. At the centre of the process of education is the teacher. This makes the teacher relevant and indispensable.

By way of conceptual clarification, the term **environment** refers to aggregate surroundings, things, conditions, or influences. This may be either physical surroundings or socio-cultural surroundings.

Environmental security on the other hand, examines threats posed by environmental events and trends to individuals, communities, or nations. It may focus on the input of human activity, conflict and international relations on the environment or how environmental problems cross state boundaries (Wikipedia, 2013).

In the academic sphere, environmental security is defined as the relationship between security concerns such as armed conflict and natural environment. Ajibade (1988) has pointed out that, in the process of consumption of natural environment by man, a number of stress is created which adversely tends to affect the quality of the environment in which man lives. This stress constitutes a set of negative contributions that alter the balance of the environment in which man lives. Any environmental problem created as a consequence of man's activity has either direct or indirect effect on his health, food, production, the quality of the air breathed, and interpersonal social relations at local and or global nature.

Because of the activity of man that may adversely affect the environment, and create environmental security threat, there is dire need for an effective management of education to create environmental awareness in the citizens both within and outside the walls of the classrooms.

Environmental education for Chessed (2008), is a process of making people aware of the negative effects of their actions on the environment and the consequences of such with a view to reducing them for the benefit of themselves and the future generation.

Within the context of education, the environment provides an arena for interaction among the teachers materials and the students. Teacher-student interaction and teacher/students-material interaction.

Before any interaction can be meaningful, there must be a match between the interacting entities. One of the critical entities is the teacher. This explains the reason why, the teacher factor becomes a vital and critical

focus of this paper.

SECURITY AWARENESS EDUCATION: A NECESSITY FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Security forces in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world are hard at work, but public safety is the responsibility of all individuals; it is a shared responsibility. The active involvement of every citizen is an integral part of collective efforts to ensure that our environment is safe. It is the school that equips individuals with relevant skills and knowledge to function effectively in the society.

Wherever we are, be it at home, in our offices, parks, market places, etc we know our environment best. We are therefore better placed to notice when something seems strange or out of place. There is need for everyone to be alert for potential risks at our work places. Strange behavior or suspicious activity which should be reported to the proper authorities with immediate effect and so, “if you see something, say something”

Who to notify

- Police
- Security agent
- The officer- in- charge of your work place

What to Report

- Describe vividly what you perceive to be suspicious
- Give precise location. If it involves people, state the number, approximate age, gender, and physical description of each person you were able to observe.
- State the time, date and the extent to which the activity lasted.
- If vehicles were involved, note their colour, type (make), licence plate number, the direction the vehicle came and left etc.

SECURITY SERVICES

Security services are the efforts to safeguard lives and properties. It may be protection of individuals or group of people, community or the entire society.

Important elements of security service

Security personnel are hired to help keep people and premises safe and maintain peace, law and order. They are also often hired to serve as personnel escorts and safety officers. Before hiring them, it is important to look at their level of education. The following constitutes important elements of security services.

1. Training

The best guards are those who have undergone training that will help them to obtain skills and knowledge that is critical to how well they can perform their job. Training helps to update the knowledge of the guards and equips them with modern techniques and strategies for keeping the environment safe.

2. Experience

An experienced security guard has the background and knowledge that he can apply on the job. This means that he can hit the ground running. Such an experienced security guard knows what to do and why.

3. Honesty

Honesty is one of the best and most important qualities of a security guard. A reliable person can always be trusted. You can let such a person take charge and you will not be worried.

4. Common sense

Even though security guards are expected to follow certain rules and guidelines, they should have common sense to know exactly how and when to work around an issue, especially if it will portray their boss or their organisation in bad perspective.

5. Ability to lead and follow

Leadership ability of security guard is very important. Working with a team is the common feature of a security guard, they must know when to take charge where the safety of their environment is at risk. In such a situation, he can impose necessary practice for common good. He must know when to abide by the rules especially those set up by their organisation.

6. Communication skills

An excellent security guard must be able to communicate well; not just with his boss but with other people the boss is involved with on daily basis.

7. Physical fitness

The best security guards are those who are healthy, physically reliable and who can defend himself herself, the boss and the organisation when the need arises.

8. Value for human life

An excellent security guard puts value on human life above all. In this type of job, strong concern for others is critical.

The Teacher Factor

Beside other inputs into the process of education, the teacher is an indispensable tool and most critical in the implementation of educational policies of a nation. Teachers are crucial players in any endeavour to create a more enlightened population. Kennedy (1998) has pointed out that 'outcomes of education are affected by the quality of the teaching workforce. Well-qualified and committed teachers will make the difference between success and failure for many students.'

The centrality of the teacher in the entire educational system has been stressed in the national policy on education document Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004). The twelve-chapter document stresses that no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers

Ukeje (1991) stressed that the teachers are the hub of any educational system and concludes that at the centre of every educational venture, is the teacher. It is upon their number, their quality, efficiency and effectiveness that the success of the educational system and, indeed, the future of the nation depend.

The function of teachers is essential, as they have to inculcate important values in future generations and ensure the holistic development of their students. The best teachers strive continuously to develop in their students respect for others, their cultures, their religions, conventions, traditions and other points of view. It follows therefore, that, the training of teachers should also include the pursuit of moral, intellectual and aesthetic virtues and their acquisition. The major task of teachers would, then be, to impart these virtues to their students in addition to the main task of teaching the standard school subjects.

The Significance of the Teacher

Effective implementation of any educational policy requires that human and non-human resources must be provided in sufficient quantity and quality. Teachers who constitute the human resource base for effective implementation of educational policies are the crucial inputs into any educational system. The National Policy on Education enunciated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stresses that no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers.

The problem of quality teachers in all fields of discipline seems to be an acknowledged one among educators and the general public at large. The higher elementary teacher of the 1960's became a misfit in the 1990s, the highly valued Grade II and I teacher of yester-years became irrelevant in the 20th Century and is still not relevant today. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) qualification for teachers of the Junior Secondary School is the most common qualification among teachers today, this qualification again is no longer adequate and relevant at this level, and rather the national policy on education recommends that NCE will untimely become the minimum qualification for entry in to the teaching profession.

The changing phases and paces of education in Nigeria requires that teachers must also change if they will continue to be relevant and also serve as an appropriate key that will open the door to a better world for all Nigerians.

Goals of Teacher Education outlined in the National Policy on Education

It is important at this point to highlight the goals of teacher education in Nigeria as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education: These goals are to:

- produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;
- encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world;
- enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession

Teacher Training institutions

The statutory responsibility of producing teachers in Nigeria is vested in the following institutions:

- i. National Teachers Institute (NTI) – by distance learning approach.
- ii. Colleges of Education (These offer training in either single or double major areas).
- iii. Institutes of Education (usually Part-time or Sandwich or Long Vacation approach).
- iv. Polytechnics (NCE Technical, B. Sc. (Ed) Technology
- v. Faculties of Education (These offer PGDE certificate, B.Ed., B.Sc (Ed), B.A. (Ed), M. Ed and Ph.D degrees).

At each of these levels, the component of training involves:

- a.) General studies
- b.) Education studies
- c.) Specialised studies relating to the field of specialisation
- d.) Teaching practise.

The quality of teachers produced by this arrangement apparently does not seem to meet the demands of equipping the teacher trainees with knowledge, skills and attitude to enable them perform effectively their roles. This has therefore, led to the following fundamental questions about the teacher training programme in Nigeria.

Fundamental Questions about the Teacher Education Programme

A closer look at the graduate teachers being produced by the teacher education arrangement raises a number of fundamental questions about the institutions charged with the responsibility of training teachers:

- (i) Are the Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities, National Teachers Institute (NTI), Colleges of Education (COE) and Polytechnics properly positioned to carry out the business of training teachers that are of high quality?
- (ii) Can these institutions reverse the current trend by removing the weaknesses at their various levels of the training programme? Or even correct the defects at the lower level?
- (iii) Where does the fault lie? With the Inputs? or process? Can the system be rectified?

Quality Teachers

Quality in this respect refers to the steps taken by higher education institutions responsible for producing teachers to make sure that they are able to perform their jobs or render their services effectively. In other words, the steps they take to ensure that they produce 'quality teachers instead of the more traditional 'qualified teachers' who just meet certain certification requirements (Wasagu, M. A. (2008).

If teachers are not able to teach primary school pupils well, as is presently the case with many 'qualified' Nigerian primary and secondary school teachers, or, if they are notable to impart useful skills to them, then the MDG of achieving Environmental Sustainability and Universal Primary Education will be an illusion. These and other education related MDGs can hardly be achieved if there is no change in the present approach to the recruitment and training of teacher education candidates.

In order to produce teachers that are capable of making a difference to their students' academic performance, thereby contributing towards achieving both the country's objectives of basic education and the MDG of universal primary education and environmental sustainability, attention should be turned from a concern about having sufficient numbers of teachers to concern about the number of quality teachers. There is, therefore the need for a break with business as usual, in regard to teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher Motivation, Training and Empowerment

These are critical for efficiency and productivity. Teacher supply at all levels of education in the country has fallen short of expectation. The teacher-student ratio is high and is far above that recommended by the national policy of education. Some primary school teachers are stark illiterates as they hardly make correct sentences in English. The supply of teachers is inadequate.

The teacher as a stakeholder is expected to possess the professional knowledge to lead the students in instruction. In addition to serving in an instructional role capacity, the teacher can be a mentor, supervisor, counselor, and community leader. The teacher can be a mentor to students or other teachers. The role of supervisor is present in every aspect of a teacher's daily responsibilities. The teacher's role as counselor can be used to offer advice to students or school advisory committees.

"The empowerment of teachers will facilitate the empowerment of students (Ukeje, 2000)." Teacher empowerment takes the form of providing teachers with a significant role in decisions making, control over their work environment and conditions, and opportunities to serve in a range of professional roles (Ukeje, 2000).

THE TEACHER, THE INPUT AND THE PROCESS

Teacher effectiveness in the process of educating the citizenry depends on a number of variables, one of which is the input component of the process of education. This input components are shown in Figure 1.

The teacher himself as the implementer of the curriculum interacts with the students and resources in a classroom environment. It is the consequent of the interaction that leads to educational outcomes, performance or achievements. Teacher competence and capability and other qualities of the teacher affects achievement of the students. The emphasis here is that the teacher must be effective in order to produce learners with higher performance or achievements. It is the only basis for which individuals who are produced by the school system will be useful to themselves as well as make meaningful contributions towards improving the environments.

CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the need for environmental education as a necessity for preventing threats that pose problems to the environment. The paper outlines a number of human activities that may damage the environment and create security problems.

Education is considered as a viable tool for developing human capacities and capabilities towards eliminating threats that may make the environment a secured. The teacher as the implementer of the school curriculum is central in achieving the aims and objectives of using education as a tool for inculcation into the learner, knowledge, skills and attitude that will lead to preserving the environment thereby ensuring security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues raised in this paper are critical in ensuring that the environment is safe. A safe and friction-free environment is a prerequisite to reducing conflicts and allowing meaningful interactions. Consequently, it is recommended as follows:

1. Effective management of education must be given emphasis at all levels. Specifically, environmental education must continue to feature prominently in school curricula at all levels.
2. Environmental awareness must be created among the students, the rural populace as well as the urban dwellers through various strategies.
3. Teacher preparation programmes must be strengthened in order to produce an effective teacher for our school system.
4. There is need for change in attitude of Nigerians through various strategies which have been put in place using various agencies such as National Orientation Agency.

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