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MYRIAD PROBLEMS OF TEACHERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the teaching force is demoralized with little motivation. Teachers previously benefiting from considerable public respects and reasonable financial rewards, their status is today in exponential decay. The crises in the teaching profession are threatening the ability of Nigeria to reach internationally agreed targets to expand and improve education. To this regard, the study focuses on the situation of teachers in Nigeria today, the myriad problems they are facing and the detrimental effect these problems are having on children's ability to have quality education. The paper argues that the survival of Nigeria as a viable society will depend on the health of her educational institutions, more especially, on how well the teachers that are the backbone of quality education are treated. In an attempt to identify and find solution to the problems, the paper used participatory advocacy research methodology to explore teachers' views of their profession. What actually motivates teachers? What affects their morale? In addition, what will help them perform well? The problems and prospects gathered from the voices of teachers and educationists came out with holistic recommendations on how teachers' motivation and morale could be improved, in order to have a virile and quality education in

Nigeria. It is expected that the outcomes of the study may benefit the overall population of Nigerians, with special reference to education policy formulators and implementers. It serves as a media through which teachers problems and voices will be spread and be heard. It is also hope that an efficient education policy that will address the myriad problems of teachers will have a positive impact on the overall development of socio-economic and political aspects of the entire country.

Keywords

Education, Implications, Problems, Quality, Teachers

1. Introduction

Education is generally defined as an aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops his/her abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior, which are of value to the society in which he/she lives. It is the conscious training of the young to a life, which is useful to him or her and to the society to which he or she belongs. In other words, education is the fundamental birthright of every child, empowering them for the future, putting opportunity directly into their hands, best antipoverty strategy, and the best economic development programme. (Ifedili, C.J. & Ochuba, V.O 2009 and Berg, 2012)

The roles of education in the development of a society are vastly documented in academic journals, which I do not intend to revisit it here. This study concentrates on the myriad problems of teachers that are major factors for the downfall of education and the need for Nigerian leaders as well as the public at large to pay close attention to the grievances of the teachers, so that the falling standard of education in the nation will be rescued. Because the standard of education of any nation is, depend on how well the teachers that are the backbone of educational advancement are treated.

Nigeria is among the African countries that are endeavor with both human and material resources necessary to redeem her educational enterprise and it has the technical expertise as well as the financial resources to turn around her educational system for the better. However, what Nigeria has always lacking is the moral courage and the political will to make things better. The Nigerian education system has witnessed tremendous growth and expansion since independence in 1960. However, the system has undergone only quantitative improvements in terms of number of institutions and students enrolment while there has been little development in

respect of capacity to maintain standards and efficiency in the process and products of education.

1.1 Preview of Past Teachers' Status in Nigeria

In the past, the economy of the country was stable. Education was considered a viable venture worth investing upon, and the enrolment population of the existing schools was manageable. Education used to be a much-revered enterprise. Schools used to be hallowed grounds and ivory towers. From the 1960s and 80s government schools were fairly well funded, and there was competition between government owned schools and those owned by private agencies, especially the missions. (Dike V. 2002)

Teachers on their part used to be very well respected among all professional bodies. In the years gone by, more especially in the villages, the teachers constituted the enlightened leaders in the society. They enjoyed similar or more upgraded treatments than other government workers. For instance, once employed car loans were ready for them and teachers were among the highest paid group in the villages, and so were among the first to be able to buy gramophone records, to sleep on wooden beds, and make use of mosquito nets at night. They served as consultants on a number of issues. For instance, when a child in a village was sick and no herbs could cure him, the teachers were consulted for the right white-man's medicine to resort to, as if the teachers were medical doctors. When a case was pending in a court of law, the teachers were consulted as to the best course of action to take, as if they were lawyers. However, the people respected them, because they considered them to be reservoirs of all knowledge and skill. (Fafunwa A. B. 1974)

Because of the well treatments given to them, they achieved their objectives and imparted knowledge, learning experiences at their disposals and stimulated, guided, directed, and facilitated learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skills being imparted. It is clear that teachers in the past helped the learners often in a school, as well as in a family, religious, and community setting. They are the last post to translate government policies and intentions into practical form. A teacher performs a number of functions in the school system to facilitate effective teaching and process that lead to progress. According to Professor Fafunwa (1964), of law "the Nigerian teacher of yesterday was expected to be among other things 'a good citizen, a community leader, an innovator, a disciplinarian, an enlightened parent, and often a reservoir of all knowledge and skill'. Therefore, teachers are very important factor in the achievement of

quality education in any nation. (Fafunwa A. B. 1992)

1.1.1 The Major Problems of Teachers

Inadequate funding of the education sector has been the first major problem facing the Nigerian teachers generally. The Nigerian government, over the years has not been meeting the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. When Nigeria's allocation to education is compared with that of other less affluent societies in Africa, the picture becomes more discouraging. For instance, in the 90s Angola 4.9%; Cote d'ivoir 5%; Ghana 4.4%; Kenya 6.5%; Malawi 5.4%; Mozambique 4.1%; Nigeria 0.76%; South Africa 7.9%; Tanzania 3.4%; and Uganda 2.6%. In the recent past, the Nigerian allocation to Education in the National Budget for 2003, 2004, and 2005 were 7%, 12%, and 11% respectively. (The Guardian On-line, June 17, 2001).

Relatively speaking, the above disheartening statistics show how insufficient Nigeria's allocation to the education sector has been. As a result, most of these schools are in dilapidating states. The schools lack basic textbooks, library and laboratory equipment and other tools for imparting knowledge. This shows that Nigeria has a weird value system: it is a society where priorities are turned to their heads.

1.1.1.1 Low Salaries and Poor Working Conditions

In Nigeria teachers' salaries and working conditions are still very poor. Teachers salaries and other incentives are either woefully inadequate or, because of malfunctioning salary payment systems, are paid late, paid only partially or not paid at all. Comparatively speaking, teachers are the least remunerated workers in the Nigerian economy. For instance, the salaries of the less educated local government counselors are higher than that of even university professors; talk less of primary or secondary school teachers. Non-salary benefits such as subsidized accommodation, travel and health insurance, are not a privilege for teachers to enjoy. As a result, many teachers have to take second jobs (often as private tutors, or by engaging in subsistence farming or other jobs) to make ends meet.

Despite being abused of non-payment of basic salaries and working under poor teaching conditions, the public and the government are blaming them for the falling standard of education in the nation. The shabby treatment of teachers has subjected their families to the ills of poverty. It is obvious that over the years the Nigerian teacher has become notorious for poverty, such that

the noble profession no longer attracts first class graduates from our universities and polytechnics. It is unusual today for a young graduate to wish to make a career out of teaching. Many pick up the chalk as a last resort, when all efforts to secure other jobs fail, and they remain in teaching only for as long as they are unable to find better jobs. Actually, the most qualified teachers change their profession. They go and work with NGOs. As soon as, they get other opportunity they shift. (Akhaine, S. 1999 & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

The plight of Nigeria's teachers is pitiful; many of them have died of hunger, diseases, and out of frustration. In fact, the system has turned many of them into beggars and destitute. Many of those who worked all their lives could not boast of a house of their own to retire into as they have joined the ranks of the working poor. Denying the teachers equal access to the nation's resources is a violation of their human rights. As a result, being a teacher in Nigeria today is increasingly becoming a curse because they are being treated with little or no respect. In fact, in Nigeria some people think that teachers are lesser human beings who do not deserve anything better than the shabby treatments they receive. . (Fafunwa A. B. 1992)

1.1.1.2 Lack of Teachers' Consultation

Teachers have many good ideas about the organization of the school, curriculum, planning and extracurricular activities but do not feel that the opportunities exist for them to contribute towards such decisions. Therefore, one of the most disturbing issues for teachers, and one of the biggest blockages to effective policy reform, is actually lack of teachers' voices in decision making about education reforms and the implementation of those reforms. The problem seems to be endemic at all levels of the system, ranging from the school level where teachers' views are often ignored by head teachers, managers and inspectors, all the way up to state or national levels where teachers' representatives are more often than not denied a place at the table by governments and donors alike. Repeatedly throughout the use of participatory advocacy research methodology to explore teachers' views of their profession, while the teachers expressed their joy at being asked for their views, but unfortunately, most of them reported that 'they had never before been asked for their opinions nor even to give their contribution during education policy reforms. (Oral interview with Bukar Adam 2014)

At the school level, there appears to be a widespread lack of involvement of teachers in decision making by school management. Teachers interviewed in the literature feel they are

rarely consulted about important decisions and reforms that affect their work. In many cases, communication between managers and teachers is in the form of orders and instructions. (Oral interview with Kachalla Modu, 2015)

1.1.1.3 Lack of Parental Support

Nothing is more frustrating for a teacher than parents who do not support their efforts to educate their children and not expressing their solidarities during teachers' strikes. Having parental support is invaluable and the lack of parental support can be paralyzing. When parents are not following through with their responsibilities at home, it usually has a negative impact in the class. Research has proven that children whose parents make education a high priority and stay consistently involved will be more successful academically. (Ejiogu, A. 1999)

1.1.1.4 Overcrowded Classroom and Over Burdened Task

Due to demographic increase learners, enrolment into schools became high. If the Pupil-teacher ratios is not balance classes became overcrowded and unmanageable, where by teaching becomes little more than crowd control. In such situations, moves away from 'chalk and talk' rote learning, recommended as long ago as 1966. They go home frustrated because they have been confronted with the impossible task to teach 80 or more children. The use of double or triple shifting (in which the same teachers are expected to teach two or three different shifts of children per day) or multi-grade teaching (whereby teachers are expected to teach differently aged children, at different stages of their studies in the same classroom) is additional problems to teachers and is widespread. The effect on teachers is not only de-motivation, but also exhaustion. (Musa, M. B. 1987 & Ijaiyi, 1999)

1.1.1.5 Lack of Reliable Union Body

Finally, but not the last, strongly speaking Nigerian teachers with their large number and solidarity can formidably struggle for their rights and the governments must to listen to them, better than any other union bodies. However, the teachers lack strong and reliable union leaders that can stand for them. The union officials ranging from the federal, state down to the local authorities are in most cases loyalists to the governments and as a result, they failed to fight for the rights of the teachers, which others arguing that they use to sell during negotiations. Their primary duty is to collect union dues at the end of every month, which they personalized to enrich themselves. This factor is one of the major area where teachers are been paralyzed and

lost all hopes of solving their problems in the near future.

2. Implications to Quality Education

Generally, the ‘standard or quality of education’ in Nigeria, can literally measure with what the products of education could do in yesteryears to what it can do today. For example, it is a common belief that most things the primary school leavers of yesteryears could do, cannot be effectively done by secondary students of today. The products of primary schools of yesteryears could easily write letters, whereas secondary school students of today cannot. Teachers without Boarders (2006) reported that the standard of education is how the products of schools can be measured in terms of outcome. That is, a measure of how school leavers contribute to the society in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. This is in terms of skills, knowledge and right attitude acquired by graduates the country produces. When the standard is low, half-baked graduates are produced. These graduates go into the labor markets with less than knowledge and less skills and often with dubious attitudes. (Hill et al., 2003)

The argument on falling standard of education in Nigeria can be appreciated when one recalled the exceptional performance of the products from the first six Nigerian Universities (University of Ibadan, Ile Ife, Lagos, Benin, Nsukka, and Zaria). In those good days, their products competed favorably with any other University in the world. Their products were offered special admission by University of Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, and London into their post-graduate courses. The students recorded breaking performances and the best multinational companies and corporate bodies globally employed most of them. However, today none of Nigerian University is among the top 6,000 Universities of the world. (An interview with Tahir Ayuba 2015)

Standard of education may also be seen from either passing or failing of external examinations like WAEC, NECO, NABTEB, and JAMB among others in Nigeria. However, due to high level of examination malpractice because of student’s inability to pass exams independently, such evaluation cannot be pushed far. The validity of most certificates of all levels, more especially those of external examination as from the 1980s are questionable in Nigeria.

The general feelings among Nigerians suggest that teachers are the main determinants of quality in education. The quality of any education system depended very much on the

competence, commitment, and motivation of the teachers. If they are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated, immoral, anti-social, the whole nation is doomed. If they are ignorant in their disciplines and impart wrong information, they are not only useless but also dangerous. Therefore, teachers' myriad problems have adverse effects on the Nigerian education sector with dimensional consequences.

Firstly, due to unfavorable condition of service, many have minimal concentration to the profession, because of their involvement in some other assignments outside the teaching job. Some Teachers engage in some private practice in order to fill the vacuum. However, this tendency jeopardizes the progress of the profession and adversely affecting quality education in Nigeria. This problem is rightly observed by UNICEF in its 'state of the world's children' report for 1999' pointed out that about four million Nigerian children have no access to basic education, and that majority of those that are 'lucky' to enter schools are given sub-standard education (Akhaine S. 1999).

Secondly, the attrition in the teaching force and dwindling enrolment of teachers kept away-qualified teachers in the education sector. The teachers' conditions of service are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best of brains in the profession. Today, there are holders of professional qualifications in education serving in the banks, customs departments, hotels, immigration, and airways and so on. The continued uncomplimentary public perceived image of teachers may not likely attract the right caliber of people to be retained in the teaching profession.

Thirdly, during teachers' demands the administration, through the Minister of Education, has only succeeded in making high-sounding promises and bogus plans on how to fulfill teachers' demands. When pushed to the wall repeatedly there was no option left for teachers than to take to the streets striking. For months and sometime for years the teachers, has been on strike, most public schools and Universities have been shut down. Despite, the durations of the strikes the academic calendar used to maintain the students' progress of going to the next class. Notwithstanding, students graduated, without compromising the number of weeks, months required for each academic session. This lacuna rendered academic calendars worthless and any sense of time outdated. The period of strikes after strikes led to students remaining in their homes for months and years and this had seriously affected the quality of education in Nigeria.

Therefore, during the periods of teachers strikes the standards of education is dwindling in Nigeria. The UNICEF in its 'state of the world's children' report for 1999' pointed out that about four million Nigerian children have no access to basic education, and that majority of those that are 'lucky' to enter schools are given sub-standard education (Akhaine, S. 1999).

Fourthly, due to teachers' lack of commitments to their duties they handled the profession with I do not care attitude. As a result, there is no record of late comers to lecture. Where if any, assignment is given, the papers are not marked. The moral character of the students, which include management of time, is not the business of the teacher. In most of the public institutions, even though the students are scheduled to resume in a fixed time, no academic work commences until around the middle of term or semester. Some students fully knowing that teachers are not committed to the principle of discipline and punctuality come in when lectures have ended. The few that reported more often than not remain idle because the teacher was not in class. Generally, there is a general delusion as to the real importance of academic work. At the end of the term or semester, due to improper or poor utilization of academic activities, no appreciable academic work is done. The students knew and the teachers knew that the syllabus has not been covered. Hence, the teachers and students resorted to printed lecture notes, which they crammed and "re-produce verbatim" on examination day. The results of the situation culminated in general examination malpractice. Examination malpractice has pervaded all the levels of education in Nigeria. Students are the centre of examination malpractice; they have masterminded various techniques of examination malpractice. Parents are also helping their children to cheat in examinations. Teachers are also at the centre of examination malpractice helping their students to cheat during examinations. These syndromes have adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning obtained in most schools of Nigeria.

Finally, to narrow the discussion, because of classrooms were overcrowded with an average pupil to teacher ratio of over eighty pupils against one teacher, in lower grades classes often exceeding hundred children, the quality of learning is deeply affected by such ratios. In real terms, it can be estimated that within the past three decades, Nigeria has jeopardized the education of millions of children through admitting more students, while there were no enough teachers to educate them. Likewise, in country like Nigeria where pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) are already very high, further demands on teachers could be detrimental to teacher capacity and

morale and result in diminished learning outcomes among students.’ (Ubom, I.U. 2002)

2.1 Recommendations

The leaders and the public that are accusing teachers over the nation's dwindling standards of education failed to find solutions to the problems. For the teachers the solutions are simple and obtainable within the scope of the nation's leaders and economy, if the concern is there. Teachers need functioning and supportive management structures. They need to feel valued and supported by their managers, supervisors and head teachers, as well as by district or local level education officials, in order for them to be motivated and to carry out their teaching responsibilities effectively.

To achieve the above sighted teachers' grievances the first and for most move, is for Nigerian government to revisit her allocation of funds to the education sector. The government has to accept and implement the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. Accordingly, the education sub-sector should be managed by competent and honest professionals (technocrats from within or without) who are inspired by moral purpose to make a difference in the lives of the students and the teachers by properly taking care of the institutions and redistributing the wealth of the nation.

Secondly, because of low pay and little motivation, teaching is not the first choice for many people who are thinking of a career. Both UNESCO and the Global Campaign for Education have argued for some years that there is a strong link between teacher motivation and performance, and education quality. Hence, there will be no quality education unless the basic conditions of teachers are improved. Government has to improve teachers' dignities and welfare packages. Teaching profession should be truly professionalized; public should develop positive perception of teachers. The government should reflect the importance of teachers as well as the responsibilities of all kinds, which fall upon them by comparing favorably with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar or equivalent qualifications. Teachers' salary levels should be decided nationally in properly organized collective bargaining procedures with teachers' unions, using comparisons with similar professions in the nation. Teacher salaries must be set at a level that makes it possible for teachers to live with dignity on the salary from their work, and not to be forced to take on second or third jobs. (Adedeji, O. 1998).

Similarly, housing, travel, health and other incentives and benefits should be used as a

complement to salary rises, especially in rural or otherwise disadvantaged areas, where 'hardship' allowances can also be applied. Salary and other incentives not only have the potential to motivate existing teachers but also attract more committing teachers to the profession. By so doing, teachers will enjoy a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families.

Thirdly, to improve the standard of education in Nigeria, the society has to first educate the educators, and motivate them to perform their duties well. Trained and motivated teachers are by far the most crucial ingredient in the provision of quality education for all. Other inputs, such as investments in school buildings, school feeding programmes or ICT (information and communications technology), are doomed to fail if there are not enough educated and motivated teachers in schools for them to be able to teach effectively.

Fourthly, in all tiers of educational systems, teachers play a pivotal role in delivering education reforms. Teachers are both recipients and deliverers of these changes, and are thus better placed and better informed than other custodians of education about what does and does not work in education policies. Therefore, teacher participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policy initiatives is essential if reforms are to succeed. 'If teachers themselves are not clear about the changes in education policies, it is almost impossible to achieve the goals, no matter how good the new policies are.' (Akinkugbe, O.O. 1994)

Largely, one concept that is often used is school-based evaluation, meaning a process by which teachers discuss their own school as a group of professionals in such a way as to improve the quality of education. The self-evaluation model had an enormous impact in England and Wales. Over 30 local education authorities adopted this approach in their schools as a way of head teachers and teachers gathering information and using it for school improvement'. Whereby the outcome of their decisions need to be taken to high levels where policy formulators use them as raw materials in further reforms (Nicol, Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.1.1 Conclusion

The senseless politicization of education at the Federal, State, and Local Government levels, the gross neglect of education in the allocation of funds by successive governments, and the poor treatment of teachers of all cadres, have combined to rob education and the teaching profession of their traditional pride, dignity and honor. It is as if a tragic war has been deliberately waged against the destiny of the Nigerian people through the destruction of

education, the very organ in which resides the hope of tomorrow. Lacking any motivation or encouragement, their output in terms of teaching, research and publication, is understandably low. The cumulative results of all are producing graduates of secondary schools, polytechnics, and universities, who cannot compete on equal terms with their counterparts trained elsewhere. However, more painfully, that education is gradually losing its pride of place in the Nigerian society, and that the teaching profession has lost much of its status of honor, and has rather become a despised and derided profession.

Conclusively, too many things have happened within the past years to the structure, the management, the administration, the supervision, and the financing of schools, colleges, and universities in Nigeria, culminating in a serious dislocation of the educational system, whose symptoms are the much-decried fall in academic standards, widespread indiscipline, examination malpractice, frequent riots, and violent cult activities. Perhaps an even greater dislocation has occurred in the psyche of the contemporary Nigerian teachers, whose morale's are now very low. The question now is who is to be blamed over this decay? The study argues that Government can be held to be responsible for the falling standard of education. Government neglected the sector and changed policies concerning education frequently, leaving both teachers and students confused. However, lack of dedications and punctualities to duties by teachers because of unfavorable working conditions hastened the falling standard of education in Nigeria. Therefore, in absence of immediate and adequate actions to save the situation, Nigeria will continue to fall behind economically, socially and politically. Notwithstanding, if the progressive collapse in the educational sector is allowed to continue with wider dimensions, no one shall be spared; not even the children of the rich who are sent overseas, for they would come back to reap the harvest of decay in the Nigerian educational sector.

Dedication: I consciously dedicated this study to the suffered and suffering teachers of Nigeria and call on them to withstand and do all what they can afford to educate the youths and wait for their rewards in heaven, because the light is far at the end of the tunnel.

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