

# **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN A GLOBALIZED ECONOMY AND INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL (ICT) AGE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION**

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***Sahr P. Thomas Gbamanja Ph.D***

*AG. Deputy Vice Chancellor,  
Fourah Bay College,  
University of Sierra Leone.*

Our world is changing in all spheres: ‘scientific and technological, political, economic, social and cultural, and the emergence of the knowledge based’ society is changing the global economy and the status of education and teacher development and performance. Any sector of society that does not catch up with the knowledge explosion and the technological age cannot achieve quality.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are a major factor in shaping the new global economy and producing rapid changes in society within the past two decades, the new ICT tools have significantly changed the way people communicate and do business. Significant transformations have been produced by ICT in industry, agriculture, medicine, business, engineering and other fields of endeavour. They have also created significant transformation in the nature and content of contemporary education, especially in streamlining where and how effective learning can take place and the roles of teachers and students in the learning process.

It is critical that teacher education institutions assume a leadership role in the transformation of education, otherwise our teachers would be left behind in the swirl of rapid technological change.

## **Globalization and Global Education**

The information revolution of the last two decades is best characterized by two seemingly conflicting forces, namely:-

Competition and Cooperation: In the new global economy, successful firms engage in cooperative competition to capture the benefit of strategic research and development alliances and cooperative production networks.

Multinational Strategic Alliances and Global production networks are altering the national identity of products, technologies, firms, and entire industries. Through “Cooperative Competition” firms that once were rivals now form flexible cooperative ventures to jointly compete in the global market. In this process, telecommunications and computer technologies facilitate the flow of ideas, capital, goods and services, information, and knowledge across national borders. This is what globalization is all about.

Globalization however, depends on new technological frontiers that demand knowledge based on higher levels of education. Greater literacy may decrease the gap between the production and consumption of information, but to participate fully in an information society you need to acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, process, and distribute information.

Since 1995, the internet has revolutionized the way we engage in economic, political, social, and cultural transactions. On-line shopping, libraries, medical information networks, investment, banking, and travel services, games, movies, books and virtual classrooms are providing alternative modes for engaging in leisure, work, investment, trade, travel and study activities. Obviously, computer telecommunications technologies are the drivers of global technological innovation.

It is thus pertinent that education and educational practices include delivering that will promote acquisition of knowledge and skills to understand modern ICT, through global education.

Global education involves learning about those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries, and about the interconnectedness of systems, ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological. Global education involves perspective taking, see things through the eyes and minds of others – and it means the realization that while individuals and groups may view life differently, they have common needs and wants.

Thus, in the new global economy, knowledge is the most valued asset we can have. It represents our share of human capital, a rich legacy of civilization. In the twenty-first century, higher education is a pre-requisite to a full participation in the process of globalization. A global education perspective empowers us with a sense of efficiency and the confidence that we understand how the world economy and politics

work. Such a perspective requires interdisciplinary skills and knowledge of economics, would politics, cross-cultural communications, science, and technology. This is a challenge for curriculum experts in tertiary institutions.

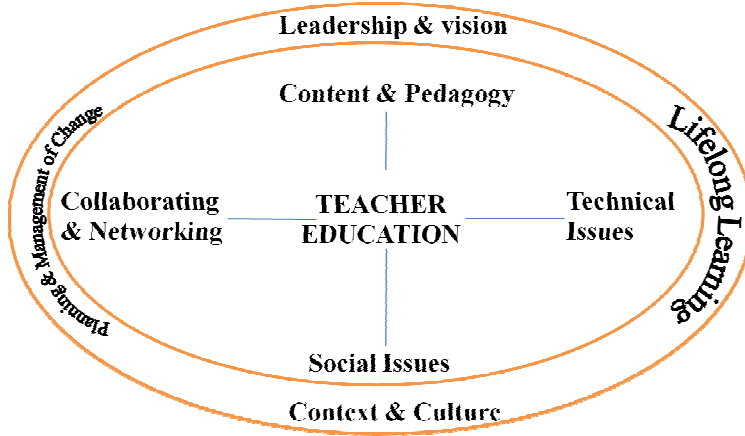
Universities the order are now busy networking, cooperating and collaborating with each other in various activities. This is the spirit of globalization and ICT is a major facilitator. ICT empowers us to network, connect, collaborate, and cooperate, and learn at work and school and at the same time demands that we continue learning beyond the classroom, beyond the office, beyond the eight hour day, and this is how quality is pursued and obtained. Sierra Leone will get nowhere with its education industry until quality education is achieved. Quality education is synonymous with national development and sustainable economy. What then is quality education and how can this be achieved in Sierra Leone?

### **Quality Education**

Quality Education, according to Ranga, Gupta, and Lal (2010) means that the majority of the students, if not all, are able to meet the expectation of the “Minimum level of Learning”. It means stimulating, creative, thinking, developing problem – solving skills and life skills and laying emphasis on application of knowledge. Quality education thus includes:-

1. Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities.
2. Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.
3. Content that is reflected in relevant and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace.
4. Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.
5. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Quality education thus must take cognisance of four competencies of ICT that contribute to effective teacher education programmes. The following schematic diagram explains these competencies:-



### **A Framework for ICT in Teacher Education**

Pedagogy is focused on teachers’ instructional practices and knowledge of the curriculum and requires that they develop applications within their disciplines that make effective use of ICT’s to support and extend teaching and learning. Collaboration and Networking acknowledges that the communicative potential of ICT’s to extend learning beyond the classroom walls and the implications for teachers development of new knowledge and skills. Technology brings with it new rights and responsibilities, including equitable access to technology resources, care for individual health, and respect for intellectual property included within the Social Issues aspect of ICT competence. Finally, Technical Issues is an aspect of the Lifelong Learning theme through which teachers update skills with hardware and software as new generations of technology emerge.

As a final reminder of the holistic nature of this curriculum, the model illustrates the interdependence of the themes and competences – all themes interacting with all competencies.

### **What Is Teaching?**

Teaching is an attempt to help people acquire some skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideas or appreciation. In other words, the “teacher” task is to create or influence desirable changes in behaviour in his or her learners. Other authors define teaching as the guidance of pupils through planned activities so that they (pupils) may acquire the richest learning possible from their experiences. While yet some authors see teaching as the interaction between a teacher and student under the teacher’s responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the student’s behaviour.

We shall examine more closely, the idea suggested by Dewey (1933) that teaching can be likened to selling. No trader can boast that he or she has sold so much goods when nobody bought anything from him or her. Consequently, effective teaching is one that results in the pupils learning maximally what is taught them. To be able to do this the teacher must identify the needs of his learners and then prepare the materials or learning experiences that best match their needs. Therefore, the preparation, the strategies and the medium through which the learning experiences are communicated must also be compatible with the needs of the learners. It is only when this is done that one can say that teaching is effective. How do we then know that teaching is effective even after proper preparation and delivering of the lessons have been done? We know this through the process of assessment and evaluation. Every effective teaching process must result in assessment. This is the method of knowing whether or not the learners have learnt what they were expected to learn from the lesson and the extent they have learnt. If, for instance, after a particular lesson, only 30% of the class is shown to have mastered the objectives of the lesson taught, this lesson cannot be said to be effective. On the other hand, if about 70% or more mastered the objectives, then the lesson could be said to be effective. Thus, one can say that, all things being equal an effective lesson preparation leads to an effective lesson delivery, and an effective lesson delivery leads to an effective mastery of lesson objective.

From the backdrop, we see that teaching is a human undertaking whose purpose is to help people learn. It is an interaction between a teacher and a student under the teacher's responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the student's behaviour. The purposes of teaching thus, are to help learners to:-

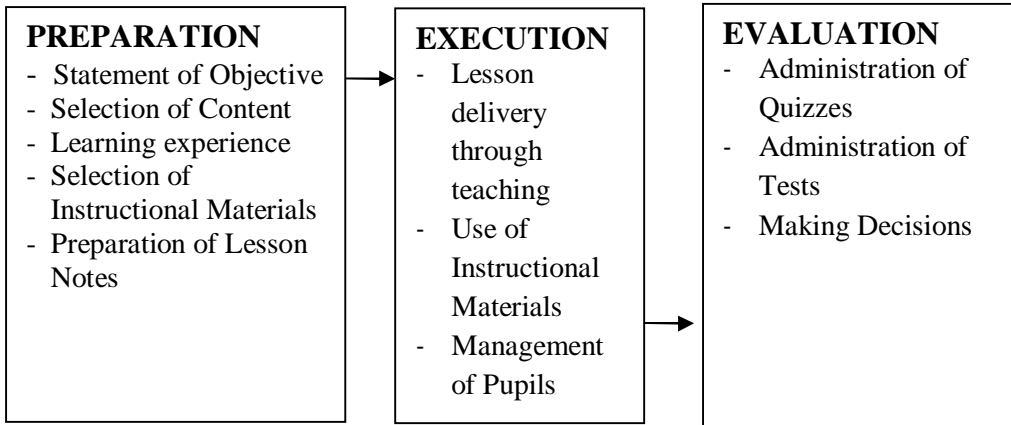
1. Acquire, retain and be able to use knowledge.
2. Understand, analyse, synthesize and evaluate skills.
3. Establish habits and
4. Develop acceptable attitudes or behaviour patterns.

Thus, effective teaching could lead to a student's successful achievement and subsequent attainment of the planned educational objectives.

### **The Components of Effective Teaching**

The classification of related set of activities that the teacher engages in forms the components of teaching.

According to Awotua-Efebi (1999) three major components of teaching that have been identified are preparation, execution, and evaluation of teaching events. These are schematised below:-



### **Components of Effective Teaching**

At the preparation stage, every teacher must plan the lesson that is intended to be taught. This includes all the activities of the teaching that lead to putting the lesson together, i.e. formulating appropriate objectives, relevant subject matter, teaching aids, and the resultant lesson notes.

The execution stage is where the teacher communicates the lesson to the learners. His strategies and appropriate methodologies are laid out in the lesson notes. Classroom management, which is a part of execution and evaluation, entails classroom controls, hygiene, and general classroom discipline.

Evaluation deals with ascertaining that the lesson is effective. It is a feedback to tell the teacher whether the student has learnt and whether the teaching strategies and specific objectives of the lesson taught were achieved.

### **All These Must Involve Quality Teachers Who Are Well Trained**

A trained teacher, therefore, is an educationist, who underwent pedagogical training including a good knowledge of the principles and practice of education, in addition to his or her teaching subjects or discipline. A good teacher must be trained in the basic elements of what to teach, how to teach it, and when to teach it. He must be familiar with contemporary content of education, methodology and techniques or strategies. Personality of the teacher; and the characteristics or qualities of the learner.

Thus, effective teaching involves a fusion between sound academic knowledge and profound knowledge of pedagogical principles which are complex and many.

It is vital, therefore, that the teacher be involved in the decision-making process of curriculum planning. Specifically, he will be involved in planning instruction within and outside the classroom, counselling learners, managing the classroom, providing and organizing a healthy relationship between the community and the school. The teacher's role is of vital importance. He is the promoter of the school curriculum, the interpreter of societal dreams and aspirations into practical realities, and he is a vital intermediary between the society and the learner.

Thus, quality teacher is one who has:-

1. Good knowledge of subject matter.
2. Good personality.
3. Professionalism.
4. Ability to understand child psychology.
5. Ability to inspire learners.
6. Ability to be resourceful and be possesses skills to improvise.
7. Ability to observe and evaluate Gbamanja (1999), (2002)

### **Challenges of Teachers in a Globalized ICT World**

As teachers in this globalized world your knowledge and use of ICT in your classroom is apparent. As you continually develop your pedagogical use of ICT's to support learning, teaching, and curriculum development, including assessment of learners and the evaluation of teaching, you will:-

1. Demonstrate understanding of the opportunities and implications of the uses of ICTs for learning and teaching in the curriculum content.
2. Plan, implement, and manage learning and teaching in open flexible learning environments.
3. Assess and evaluate learning and teaching in open and flexible learning environments.

ICT's provide powerful new tools to support communication between learning groups and beyond classrooms. The teacher's role expand to that of a facilitator of collaboration and networking with local and global communities. The expansion of the learning community beyond the classroom also requires respect for diversity, including inter-cultural education, and equitable access to electronic learning resources. Through collaboration and networking, professional teachers promote democratic learning within the classroom and draw upon expertise both locally and globally. In doing so, teachers will:-

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the added value of learning nationals and collaboration within and between countries and other countries.
2. Participate effectively in open and flexible learning environments as a learner and as a teacher.

3. Create or develop learning networks that bring added value to the education profession and to society.
4. Widen access and promote learning opportunities to all diverse members of the community, including those with special needs.

The most obvious challenge for professional development of teachers in present day, Sierra Leone is to provide courses in basic ICT's knowledge and skills. These types of courses, taught at training centres or universities with a syllabus set by regional or national agencies, have been a common practice in many countries. We must not however, that the development of ICT does not necessarily improve education if the focus is on ICT's. The vision must focus on what ICT's can do to improve education.

For education to reap the full benefit of ICT's in learning, it is essential that pre-service and in-service teachers have basic skills and competencies. Teacher education institutions and programmes must provide the leadership for pre-service and in-service teachers and model the new pedagogies and tools for learning.

Importantly, they must also provide leadership in determining how the new technologies can best be used in the content of the culture, needs and economic conditions within Sierra Leone.

## **Conclusion**

For developing countries ICTs have the potential for increasing access to and improving the relevance and quality of education. It thus, represents a potentially equalizing strategy for developing countries. However, the reality of the Digital Divide – the gap between those who have access to, and control of technology and those who do not – means that the introduction of ICT's at different levels and in various disciplines of education will be a most challenging undertaking. Failure to meet the challenge would mean a further widening of the knowledge gap and the deepening of existing economic and social inequalities.

The quality teacher who will have to produce a quality graduate or school leaver from a quality education set-up is faced with numerous challenges especially in present day Sierra Leone, like many other “struggling” nations in the world. The teacher is operating in an unhappy work environment, with little or no instructional materials, inadequate laboratory space and equipment, unfriendly office accommodation and the poor salaries, incentives and other benefits that make a teacher happy. But will these, make us stop teaching? No at all. We are faced with a great task and our motto should be “our reward is in heaven”, but if we work well, our reward actually begins to flow right from here on earth.