

# **TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: LOOKING AT THE IMPLICATIONS FOR VALUE REORIENTATION IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, at the launch of the National Reorientation Campaign: “Change Begins with Me” at the Banquet Hall of the State House, Abuja, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 2016, decried what can be summarised as the degradation of moral values in Nigeria. The concern expressed by the President at the launch lends voice to the urgent need for value reorientation in the country. This paper recognises teacher effectiveness as being the most important factor in student achievement – for ultimate value reorientation in Nigeria. The paper closes with recommendations to the effect that for teachers to be highly effective in improving student achievement for value re-orientation in Nigeria, they should look beyond expertise in their respective academic fields and embrace, among other things, caring relationships with students and collaborative relationships with their peers and with parents and community members.

**Keywords:** Teacher Effectiveness; Student Achievement; Values; and Value Re-orientation

Traditionally, teachers were the “holders of information” and their role was to impart knowledge to their students by divulging this information to them. The teacher is now evolving from the traditional role of a “transmitter of knowledge” into the role of a “mediator in the construction of knowledge”, a facilitator, and, even at times, a social worker. Playing the role of a “mediator in the construction of knowledge” entails effective teaching, which is more than just the successful transference of knowledge and skill or application around a particular topic. Effective teaching ensures that this surface approach to learning is replaced by deeper, student-driven approaches to learning that

analyse, develop, create and demonstrate understanding. Students need to initiate learning and maintain engagement during learning in their development as independent lifelong learners (Federation University Australia [FUA], 2019).

Teaching effectively therefore requires not only a broad knowledge of the subject matter, curriculum, and standards; it also requires enthusiasm, a caring attitude, and a love for learning; knowledge of discipline and classroom management techniques; and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. Teacher quality – used synonymously with such terms as “teaching effectively”, “effective teaching”, “quality teaching” and “teacher effectiveness” – therefore is the single most important school-related factor influencing student [engagement and] achievement (Rice, 2003 and Australian Government [AG], 2016).

### **Teacher Effectiveness – Defined**

Teacher effectiveness is quite an elusive concept (Varlas, 2009). This is because there are many conceptions of the concept and defining it always generates some controversy. In the general view, students' knowledge is summarised as a test score, and the effectiveness of a teacher is understood in the context of his/her contribution to that test score (Little, Goe & Bell, 2009). Although student scores on standardised tests can provide useful measure of a teacher's effect, they should not be the sole criteria. Test scores do not provide a full picture of teacher s' efforts and of students' circumstances, not to mention which students get tested and on what content. This is because the tests fail to measure such important attributes as creativity and critical thinking skills. Studies indicate that standardised tests reward superficial thinking and may discourage more analytical thinking. Additionally, because of the small sample of knowledge that is tested, standardised tests provide an incomplete picture of student achievement (Harris, Harris & Smith, 2013). Further to that, when students are finished with school and move into adult life, they are judged not by their ability to perform on a test of basic skills, but by the quality of their work and character, and the usefulness and effectiveness they bring to the table in the advancement of their respective societies. Thus, student test scores alone are not sufficiently reliable and valid indicators of teacher effectiveness to be used in high-stake personnel decisions, even when the most sophisticated statistical applications such as value-added modelling are employed (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravitch, Rothstein, Shavelson & Shepard, 2010). Findings of literature comprehensively reviewed by Pretorius (2012) on teacher effectiveness, in which a synthesis is made of the *knowledge, skills, attitudes* and *behaviours* associated with effective teachers, demonstrate that:

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- ✓ Effective teachers have strong personalities. They command respect. They are intelligent, full of confidence, positive, enthusiastic, friendly and genuinely care for their students
- ✓ Effective teachers believe all students can succeed and have high expectations of them.
- ✓ Effective teachers create an inviting environment in their classrooms displaying appropriate learning support materials which stimulate students' interest and are changed often
- ✓ Effective teachers have an academic orientation. They create a business-like and task-oriented atmosphere influencing high students' time on task. They spend classroom time on academic activities.
- ✓ Effective teachers display a deep knowledge and understanding of the subject or discipline they teach, the salient concepts thereof, the relations among concepts and how to apply discipline knowledge.
- ✓ Effective teachers continue learning in order to stay abreast of changing demands and the rapid increase in knowledge in most disciplines. They are active researchers
- ✓ Effective teachers know how to teach their subjects effectively. Different subjects have different epistemologies and the implicit prescriptions and proscriptions are known to effective teachers
- ✓ Effective teachers are flexible. They apply a variety of strategies and teaching approaches to ensure the best possible mastery of different aspects of the subject content
- ✓ Effective teachers have the skills to utilise technology to the fullest, not only in their classrooms but also as a valuable source of new information.
- ✓ Effective teachers are excellent communicators. They communicate subject knowledge actively, clearly and in a structured way
- ✓ Effective teachers teach the class as a whole because communication to individual students is less effective than teachers using opportunities to talk to the whole class
- ✓ Effective teachers have an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, the outcomes and assessment practices required and the particular contents to be taught in the relevant phase of learning
- ✓ Effective teachers cover the curriculum thoroughly. They organize and sequence the curriculum carefully
- ✓ Effective teachers know the child, the developmental phases and the learning needs of the various phases

### Academic Scholarship

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- ✓ Effective teachers know how to support students with learning differences or difficulties as well as those learning the language of instruction
- ✓ Effective teachers understand diversity and teach in a manner that includes all the diverse needs of students from different ethnic, religious and social groups
- ✓ Effective teachers come to their classrooms well-prepared. The three most important words to a teacher are: preparation, preparation, preparation.
- ✓ Effective teachers initiate lessons from a striking angle immediately catching students' interests.
- ✓ Effective teachers' lessons progress in a structured way by linking work with students' prior knowledge, stating clear objectives, outlining content, giving attention to key points, explaining the relations between concepts and other sections of the subject content and reviewing main ideas at the end of the lesson. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace
- ✓ Effective teachers have a limited focus in sessions because they know students do better when teachers focus on one or two curriculum areas within the same classroom activity
- ✓ Effective teachers ensure that students are actively involved in lessons in various ways. The teacher asks a lot of well-planned and challenging questions and constantly monitors students' progress and understanding. Students take part in the discussions, in problem-solving and well-planned group work
- ✓ Effective teachers incorporate regular, well-planned and challenging homework giving thorough feedback to students on their progress. They show high levels of praise and encouragement
- ✓ Effective teachers apply a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies according to the school's assessment policy utilising scores of achievement to determine trends and apply corrective teaching measures
- ✓ Effective teachers develop effective systems of record-keeping
- ✓ Effective teachers are able to reflect on their teaching practice in order to determine deficiencies and continuously improve their teaching strategies.
- ✓ Effective teachers are competent classroom managers. They are able to plan and organize classroom activities and behaviours so that an effective teaching environment is created. Noise levels are low and movement around the classroom is minimal and work-related. Although a business-like and task-orientated atmosphere is maintained, a healthy classroom climate and friendly atmosphere exist
- ✓ Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, dedication and self-efficacy.

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- ✓ Effective teachers are leaders in their own right. They have appropriate knowledge of leadership theories and styles and apply democratic leadership. Students take part in decisions and behaviour management
- ✓ Effective teachers are self-managers. They manage their time effectively and apply counter strategies to avoid burnout
- ✓ Effective teachers collaborate well with their peers in teams and with administrators, parents and education professionals to ensure student success, in particular those with special needs and at risk of failure

Based on this, teacher effectiveness is defined by the author as the collection of characteristics, competencies, and behaviour of teachers that propel students to the attainment of specific learning objectives as well as broader goals such as being able to apply a concept learnt to a practical or new situation, being able to think critically, being able to work professionally with others, being able to live in conformity to accepted standards of social and professional conduct; and living a life of service to one's community.

### **Review of Concepts: Student Achievement; Values; and Value Reorientation**

**Student Achievement:** It is not easy to define and quantify information on student achievement. The most common indicator of achievement generally refers to a student's performance in academic areas such as English Language, Mathematics, Business studies and Economics as measured by achievement tests (Cunningham, 2012). In Nigeria, these tests include continuous assessments, end of term tests, nation-wide examinations like those conducted by such examination bodies as West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO) and National Technical and Business Examination Board (NABTEB). But student achievement – to which much reference has already been made in this paper – means a lot more than student gains on standardised tests (Harris et al, 2013). The ultimate goal of any educational policy or curricular reform initiative is to maximise student achievement – i.e. to boost students' knowledge in ways that significantly effectuate their preparedness for life in the future. Looking at student achievement as evaluated by sole recourse to classroom grading systems and/or standardised test scores does not constitute a holistic look at the picture. To present the full definitional picture of student achievement, there has to be a “stepping” well beyond its traditional definition as “student academic gains in standardised tests”. El Education (2015) presents three dimensions of student achievement:

**Master of Knowledge and Skills**

- Demonstrate proficiency and deeper understanding: show mastery in a body of knowledge and skill each discipline
- Apply their learning: transfer knowledge and skills to novel, meaningful tasks
- Think critically: analyse, evaluate, and synthesise complex ideas and consider multiple perspectives
- Communicate clearly: write, speak, and present ideas effectively in a variety of media and across disciplines

**Character**

- Work to become effective learner: develop the mindsets and skills for success in college, career, and life – e.g. initiative, responsibility, perseverance, collaboration
- Work to become ethical people: treat others well and stand for what is right – e.g. empathy, integrity, respect, compassion
- Contribute to a better world: put their learning to use to improve communities – e.g. citizenship, service

**High-Quality Student Work**

- Create complex work: demonstrate higher-order thinking, multiple perspectives and transfer of understanding
- Demonstrate craftsmanship: create work that is accurate and beautiful in conception and execution
- Create authentic work: demonstrate original thinking and voice, connect to real-world issues and formats, and when possible, create work that is meaningful to the community beyond the school.

Student achievement is, therefore, defined by the writer as the attainment of specific learning objectives as well as broader goals such as being able to apply a concept learnt to a practical or new situation, being able to think critically, being able to work professionally with others, being able to live in conformity to accepted standards of social and professional conduct; and living a life of service to one's community. Simply defined, student achievement is a student performing well in academic terms, obtaining skills for real-world situations, and using the learning and skills so acquired for the good of his or her community.

**Values:** Values are a set of beliefs that direct our attitudes or our actions. They are general conceptions of what is regarded as bad and wrong; what is considered important

in life; and also what is considered desirable or otherwise in a culture (Schaefer, 2003). Values provide general guidelines for our conduct in all facets of social relations. They are like a compass that helps us behave consistently, regardless of the situation. They constitute a part of our identity as individuals or/and as members of a given culture, and they guide our behaviours at home, at work or in any other area of life. Values also constitute the foundations for co-existence in a community and relations with others. They regulate our behaviour to the benefit of collective wellbeing (Jimenez, 2008).

Examples of values required to make a person orderly within himself as well as an orderly unit of the family, society, nation and the world include: honesty – being truthful and sincere; integrity – being consistent with beliefs; trustworthiness – keeping promises/ fulfill commitment; loyalty – providing support and commitment based on ethical needs; fairness – being committed to justice, equal treatment, and respect for diversity; caring – having concern for well-being of an individual, self, and environment; respect – having confidence in beliefs and values and knowledge one understands and supporting the rights in others to express their beliefs; responsibility – contributing to one’s society in a positive way and encouraging participation of others; pursuit of excellence – having pride in work; accountability – considering and accepting the impact and consequences of personal actions and decisions, etc. All these are positive values. Then there are values – negative values – that operate against the interests of harmonious relations in society: prejudice, hatred, greed, selfishness, and others.

**Value Reorientation:** “Reorientation”, as a word, means more than one thing. For our purposes, reorientation, according to The Free Dictionary (2019), is a changed set of attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, the term “value reorientation” implies a changed set of values from those that work against harmonious relations and thus engender development in its entire spectrum to those that regulate human behaviour to the benefit of the collective wellbeing of a community.

### **Need for – and the place of the Teacher in– Value Reorientation in Nigeria**

Today, if what one reads national dailies and hears and watches on local – and even international – broadcast media provides something to go by, Nigeria is increasingly becoming a society characterised by a distressing phenomenon having to do with a degradation of values that should otherwise regulate the conduct of her citizens. The thoughts of a good percentage of the citizens are preoccupied with deceit, hatred, vindictiveness, indiscipline, lasciviousness, prejudice, greed, disrespect for authority, and the like. The consequences of this are there in the full glare of all and sundry. For example, disinclination to exertion has meant that our school children see acts contrary

to examination rules as an easy path to the possession of academic qualifications. Greed – an inordinate desire to acquire or possess surplus to personal requirements – has meant that the privileged few in positions of trust have corruptly enriched themselves with impoverishing consequences for the vast generality of the populace (*see* Adedigba & Wahab, n.d.; Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto & Nkah, 2015; and Oloidi, 2014). Little wonder then that the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, has defined corruption as the greatest form of human rights violation (State House, Office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016).

Over the decades, various value reorientation programmes have been brought on stream by successive administrations in Nigeria. In 1977, the Head of the Federal Military Government, General Olusegun Obasanjo, in his now famous Jaji Declaration, inveighed against – and implored his fellow Nigerians to eschew – conspicuous consumption and crass materialism. In 1981, the Executive President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, came up with the Ethical Revolution, and later in the course of his administration, he set up the Public Complaints Commission to levy war against corruption in high places. In 1984, General Muhammadu Buhari as military head of state launched the War against Indiscipline (WAI), a value reorientation policy that sought to force on Nigerians moral decorum in the conduct of individual and official affairs. In 1987, the Mass Mobilisation for Self Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) was inaugurated under the “military presidency” of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida as part of efforts to reorient Nigerians to shun waste and vanity and to eschew all vices in public life – vices that included corruption, dishonesty, electoral and census malpractices, ethnic and religious bigotry. In 1996, General Sani Abacha introduced the War against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C). During the presidential era of Alhaji Umar Musa Yar’Adua, the Rebranding Nigeria Campaign was launched at the International Conference Centre, Abuja as part of national efforts to change what the Federal Government saw as the pervasive negativity in international perception of Nigeria and Nigerians. On the occasion of the launch – on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 2009 – Alhaji Yar’Adua, represented by his deputy Dr Goodluck Jonathan, called on his compatriots to “support the campaign through value re-orientation [stressing] that [...] rebranding [Nigeria] should not be seen as just a one-[dimensional] affair” (Nworah, 2009).

All these national efforts at value reorientation notwithstanding, the need for value reorientation remained ever stronger. On the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, Muhammadu Buhari – this time as civilian head of the country’s administration – launched the National Reorientation Campaign “Change Begins with Me” at the banquet hall of the State House, Abuja. Muhammadu Buhari on the occasion of the launch:

There is no doubt that our value system has been badly eroded over the years. The long-cherished and time honoured, time-tested virtues of honesty, integrity, hard work, punctuality, good neighbourliness, abhorrence of corruption, and patriotism have given way in the main to dishonesty, indolence, unbridled corruption and widespread impunity. The resultant effect of this derailment in our value system is being felt in the social, political and economic sphere. It is [for this reason] that some youths will take to cultism and brigandage instead of studying hard or engaging in decent living; it is [for this reason] that some elements will break pipelines and other oil facilities, thus robbing the nation of much-needed resources; it is [as a result of this] that money belonging to our commonwealth will be brazenly stolen by the same public officials to whom they were entrusted; it is the reason why motorists drive through red traffic lights; it is the reason that many will engage in thuggery and vote-stealing during elections; it is part of what has driven our economy into deep problem out of which we are now working hard to extricate ourselves. Every one of us must have a change from our old ways of doing things. We cannot fold our arms and allow things to continue the old way (State House, Office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016, para. 6, 7).

Nigeria is therefore in dire need of value reorientation in order to pull it back from its precarious position on the threshold of complete moral breakdown, and here effective teachers have a big, if not an indispensable, role to play.

One characteristic of student achievement involves working to become ethical people: treating others well and standing for what is right – e.g. empathy, integrity, respect, compassion (El Education, 2015). If teacher quality, as we have already seen, is the most important quality influencing student achievement, then effective teachers have a responsibility well beyond imparting knowledge in the classroom. The effective teacher is therefore charged with helping students to become refined in behaviour, which involves working professionally with others, living in conformity to accepted standards of social and professional conduct; and living a life of service to national development. The teacher is thus an important agent of the value orientation required by Nigeria to achieve its set goal as a land of bright and full opportunities for all her citizens.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher effectiveness constitutes the crux of student achievement, and the characteristics of student achievement give shape and character to our meaning of an educated person. An educated person is not just one with the proficiency to demonstrate higher academic skills, but is also one with ethical values associated with having an education. This is one way of saying that the purpose of education extends beyond academic skills acquisition to embrace the need to make an individual orderly within

himself so that he or she becomes a responsible member of his/her family, his/her country and the world at large. Education, therefore, must be directed at the holistic development of an individual. This means that an educated Nigerian should also be respectable and refined in conduct and way of thinking. Inculcating values in children in this contemporary society of ours is a responsibility that belongs to both parents and teachers. Since moral values cannot be forced on children teachers need to transform themselves into role models so that the children they teach can cultivate moral values by imbibing their – i.e. the teachers’ – behavioural patterns. Therefore, teacher effectiveness can only arise from where a teacher effectively contributes to attributes desirable for an educated person.

### **Recommended Strategies for Improving Teacher Effectiveness for Student Achievement Ultimately Leading to Value-Reorientation in Nigeria**

Student achievement will not improve unless and until there is effectiveness in teaching. The skills needed for effective teaching involve more than just expertise in an academic field. Having a thorough command of a field; being able to contrast the implications of various theories, giving the student a sense of the field, its past, present, and future directions, the origins of ideas and concepts; being able to present facts and concepts from related fields; being able to use examples, details, analogies, metaphors, and variety in modes of explanation to make material not only understandable but memorable; establishing a context for material – all these count towards effective teaching, but for teacher effectiveness to be all it should be, a teacher must be able to interact with students and help them understand a new way of looking at the world. Effective teachers should be prepared, set clear and fair expectations, have a positive attitude, be patient with students, and assess their teaching on a regular basis. They should be able to adjust instructional strategies to fit both the students and the material, recognising that different students learn in different ways. An effective teacher is a role model who sets the tone for the class. If teachers are able to show enthusiasm and commitment, students are more likely to reciprocate. Conversely, when they are negative, unprepared, or impatient, these qualities will be reflected in the attitudes of their students.

Specifically, quite apart from being able to demonstrate expertise in an academic field and having excellent verbal and written communication skills for maximum impartation in the classroom, teachers, based on the definitional model of teacher effectiveness developed by Hunt (2011), should:

**(with particular reference to attitudes towards work)**

- Respect their students irrespective of their background, language, or ethnicity

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- Have high expectations for the learning of all students
- View student errors as a window for their thinking that can be used to improve student learning
- Be receptive to the involvement of parents and community members in their classrooms
- Be reflective about their practice
- Believe in collaboration with others towards common goals for student learning
- Be eager to continue to learn and to improve their practice
- Be committed to their profession  
**(with particular reference to performance of duties)**
- Ensure that classrooms are well-organised, providing an environment that fosters an interest in learning
- Ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessments are rigorous, and conform to standards
- Develop classroom rules with students and maintain orderly classrooms in which all students are treated fairly and equitably
- Effective use of time, both over-all classroom time and the time of individual students
- Use effective teaching techniques: planning lessons, presenting new materials clearly
- Help students connect new learning with previous learning, and providing guided and independent practice for new material taught
- Use assessment practices that position students as leaders of their own learning
- Respond to student errors in positive ways that help students to understand and learn the concepts involved
- Engage all students in daily lessons that require critical thinking about complex, worthy ideas, and problems
- Use formative evaluation to adjust instruction and diversify it for the needs of individual or groups of students
- Meaningful data for both them and their students to track progress towards learning goals
- Connect students to the world beyond school through meaningful fieldwork, expert collaborators, reasearch, and services learning
- Create warm and caring relationships with students.
- Maintain collaborative relationships with their peers and with parents and community members

**Additionally,**

1. Teacher employers should hire only teachers with majors in their field and with full professional certification. They should ask for evidence (e.g. verbal descriptions, student work samples, videos) of their effective classroom teaching (Kaplan & Owings, 2001).
2. Head teachers should make student achievement and failure prevention valid and workable criteria for teaching effectiveness, evaluation and continued employment (Owings & Kaplan, 2001).
3. Head teachers should actively support new teachers' professional induction. They should encourage successful colleagues' ongoing and generous support to help novice teachers become institutionally savvy and learn how to critically analyse their instructional decisions to maximise student learning. They should provide opportunities within the school for collaborative lesson planning, peer coaching, observing and discussing lessons, and reflection to prevent teachers' early disappointment, frustration, and premature departure from the profession (Kaplan & Owings, 2001).
4. Teacher education curriculum should be altered to specifically direct on:
  - Development of appropriate values including honesty, integrity, collegiality, consistency, fairness, genuine care for students, sensitivity for diversity and a work ethic
  - Development of the right attitudes and orientations including an academic orientation, high expectations, enthusiasm, being positive and motivated, an eagerness to continue learning and self-confidence
  - Training of student teacher in the use of effective learning support material and how to create an effective learning environment which attracts students' interest and make them eager to learn.

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