

TEACHER EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF NIGERIA'S SEVEN-POINT AGENDA

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Abstract

The teacher, defined as one who leads and guides the learner to acquire proper knowledge, is not properly motivated to attain high level of job satisfaction and productivity because of many factors. Because the aim of teaching-learning is not the acquisition of knowledge alone, this paper views the need to review the structures of teaching, its variables and processes with the aim of obtaining professional commitment, high level of productivity and qualitative education. The paper also takes a look at broad areas of social transformation, Nigeria's seven-point Agenda, health care and poverty eradication which, the paper believes can enhance the attainable of qualitative education. The paper concludes with recommendations which, if put into consideration and implemented, will lead to the achievement of quality education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Before we proceed, let us attempt to define the term 'teacher' in a precise way, a teacher is a person who leads and guides the learners (students) to acquire proper knowledge that would make them to be functional and responsive to the society.

It is a truism to say that the destiny of a nation lies in the hands of those who guide its youths. This fact alone recommends teaching as one of the greatest noble professions in the world. This is true because whatever the teacher does has some influence on the students for the rest of their lives. Speaking in the same vein, Carell (1978) pointed out that "teachers are important factor in mediating the effects of educational services, institutions and systems".

This paper focuses attention on the following major areas:

- Teacher Education
- Teacher's Professional Commitment
- Teacher's Welfare Scheme.
- Teacher's Education for self-reliance.
- Qualitative Education
- Education and Transformation
- Nigerian Government's 7-point agenda.

Teacher Education

One of the most important areas of keeping pace with the standard of education is in the promotion of teachers' professional commitment and in the continuing education for the teachers. It is generally agreed that there is fast rate at which knowledge is now becoming obsolete. To this end, teaching which has its central activity as imparting knowledge becomes very necessary for the purpose of efficiency and professional self development. Continuing education is an indispensable tool for the teacher because it serves the purpose of updating the knowledge of the teacher as well as providing for the teacher's liberal education. (Rahindranath in Akinpelu 2005).

Teaching Skills and Teacher's Competency

Teaching as an interactive process which involves four aspects: teacher, student, learning process and the learning situation. These four aspects are very important and should therefore exist in harmony so as to create a conducive teaching-learning environment. The bulk of responsibility falls on the teacher to create the learning situation. For instance, a teacher is not supposed to create panic, fear or unnecessary hostility among the students when creating the learning situation. Rather, a teacher is expected to create a friendly atmosphere that would be conducive for learning. When this friendly atmosphere is created by the teacher, then, the learning process which is the interaction

between the students and the teacher becomes truly interactive thereby giving the teacher the ample opportunity to impart knowledge to the students or pupils.

Worthy of mention is the fact that both the teacher and the students learn more things and develop themselves even outside their formal learning situation and process. The teaching and learning situation may be explained with the help of diagram 1.1 below.

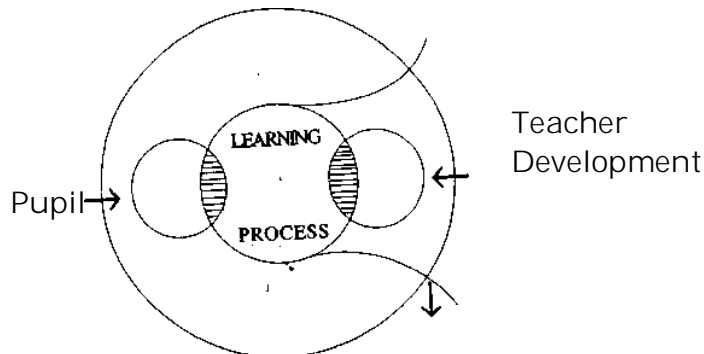


Illustration 1.1 Teacher – Taught interaction

Scientific Basis of the Art of Teaching

The most distinctive live feature of modern society is its science-based technology which has been making a profound impact not only on the economic and political life of a country but also on its educational system. The changes that occur as a result of this impact are broadly described as modernization. This modernization has affected the teaching and learning process in many ways. The recent changes in the concept of teaching-learning process have lead to the development of newer areas of educational endeavour.

The main aim of teaching- learning is not the acquisition of knowledge alone. It is the awakening of creativity, the development of proper interest, attitudes and values and the building of essential skills such as independent study. The teaching - learning process has to serve as a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation of the society. In summary, teaching and learning in modern society is to keep pace with the advantage of knowledge and skills. (Agyarwal 2006)

The Structure of Teaching, Variables and Process

Teacher is an independent variable. The teacher does the planning, organization, leading and controlling of teaching. He is free to perform various activities in order to provide learning experience in the learner.

Student as the dependent variable is expected to act according to the planning and organization of the teacher.

Content and the strategy of presentation as intervening variable leads to an instruction between the teacher and the student.

The content determines the mode of presentation.

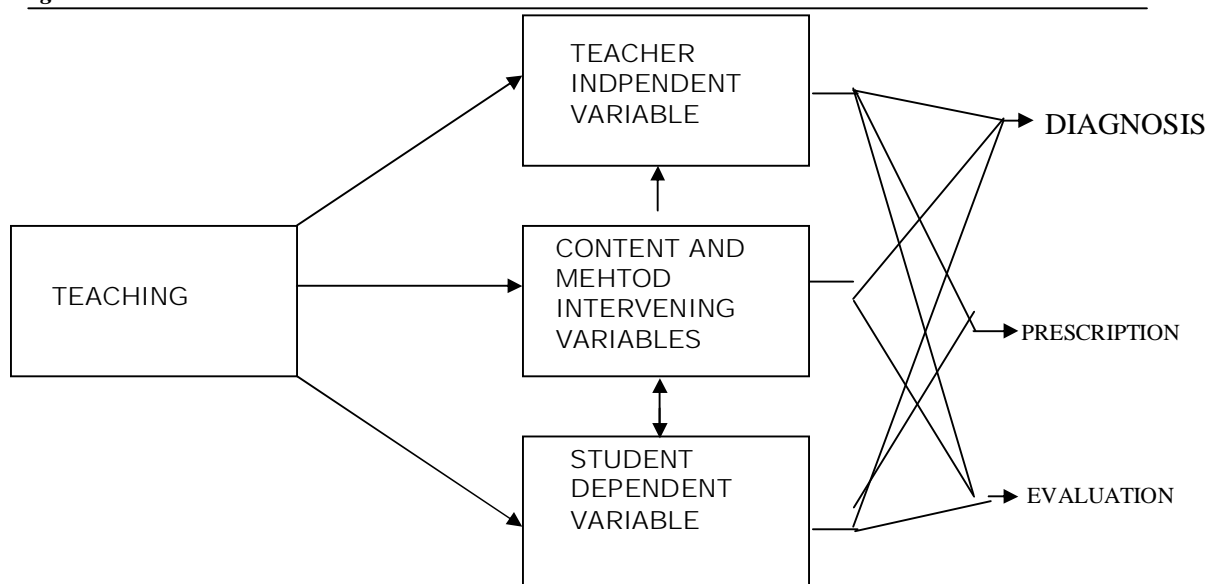


Illustration 1.2 Anatomy or Structure of Teaching

The variables perform three functions;

1. Diagnostic Function: The teacher as an independent variable is more active and diagnoses the following:
 - i. Entering the behaviour of the students.
 - ii. Teaching problems
 - iii. Individual differences.
 - iv. Content analysis in view of learning conditions.

Source: Aggarwal (2006: 43 – 453)

2. Prescriptive function: The main objective of this function is to bring desirable changes in the behaviour of the learner. The teacher makes efforts to organize the intervening variables in such a way so as to select teaching techniques and feedbacks that help in the realization of the objectives. The students help the teacher.
3. Evaluate functions: This aims at examining the effectiveness of the prescriptive function. The evaluative function has two main activities thus:
 - i. Construction criterion test.
 - ii. Evaluation of change of behaviour.

Source Agyarwal (2006 P 43-453)

Student as a dependent variable diagnoses on the basis of his perception of his activities and responses. In the process of interaction, both teacher and the student diagnose for initiations and responses.

Teachers' Professional Commitment

Akinpelu (2005,80) questions the professional commitment thus:

How then can professional commitment be instilled in teachers? Before we answer, we must first diagnose the current situation briefly, however, to give a clue to what to do. An honest and truthful assessment of the educational scene in the country cannot exonerate the teachers from whatever has happened to it in the last few decades. Success or failure of students in external examination is an institution inference...

A careful analysis of the situation will reveal two broad categories of members of staff; first, those who have never made any commitment to the teaching profession and not willing to learn and in fact, not in a position or deposition to make one.

Again there is a certain category of teachers who parade themselves as teachers in the classrooms but they have no professional qualifications to teach and therefore; have no commitment. Another set of teachers are those who had once made teaching as their personal job, but who for one reason have found it impossible to exhibit the same degree of enthusiasm.

Teachers' Welfare Scheme

The teacher's burnout syndrome, however, is a product not just of academic and professional inadequacies, but also of poor conditions of service. Intrinsic job satisfaction is one of the most important criteria of professionalism but this cannot exclude adequate extrinsic and material rewards. One of the cardinal functions of a profession is the safe guarding and promotion of its members' socio-economic welfare and well-being.

It cannot, therefore, be over-emphasized that the teacher should be adequately paid, regularly and as when due. He should not be made to suffer for so long before getting his salary. Promotion is another important area of dissatisfaction to the teacher. As it is now, the decision to promote the teacher rather seems very subjective, arbitrary, and certainly long delayed in many cases. A careful set of criteria which is known to the teachers will help to reduce their grumblings. As a matter of fact, such criteria should include evidence of continuous self and professional development through attendance of conferences, seminars, workshops and, of course, other types of in-service programmes.

Other welfare measures include provision of reasonably satisfactory working environment like staff Common Room with TV sets and Air Conditioning or fans so that staff can relax. In fact, teachers are supposed to work in a more relaxed atmosphere in which his/her creativity can best be demonstrated. At the higher level, the establishment of teachers' centers will provide among others, a forum where teachers from deferent schools can meet and exchange ideas.

Teacher's Education for Self Reliance

Education is an intervention in human normal growth processes, which never leaves the recipient the same as before. To be candid, self-reliance was not a targeted focus of our educational system until recently. Akinpelu (2005:99) noted that:

The Nigerian Educational System in general, there are nevertheless a few attempts here and there to reverse the trend, to innovate and to gear educational efforts towards self-reliance. The only problem is that these efforts are far too spasmodic to expect a consistent or permanent influence on the system.

For some years back, government of Western Region made some experiments in educational innovation which can be regarded as promotive of self reliance. These were the comprehensive school experiment of the early sixties and school farm projects in Oyo state in the early eighties. Both were government projects.

Qualitative Education

Qualitative Education demands that an appropriate programme be worked out to make the school environment conducive for learning at all levels in terms of providing adequate physical facilities and educational materials. This would also demand appropriate conditions of services for teachers and other categories of educational personnel in order to guarantee the effective delivery of instruction at all levels of education.

Teacher Education As An Instrument For National Development And For The Achievement Of Nigeria's Seven-Point Agenda

Qualitative education is evidently, a key factor in preparing students for successful post school careers and a rewarding labour market experience. The need to strategically refocus the entire education system towards providing the human resources needs of the nation at all levels must be seriously addressed. As Nigeria aspires to transform itself from the status of a developing country to a developed one, the following attributes of a developed country must inform the character of Nigeria strategic educational refocusing:

- Sustainable industrial and agricultural development.
- The provision of functional and efficient infrastructural facilities.
- Effective exploitation and utilization of available natural resources.
- The provision of highly skilled labour force. (Adeyemi 2001:223-224).

Education and Social Transformation

Education and social change are mutually reinforcing and complementary. An educational change leads over time, to a corresponding social change and social change in turn, intensifies the need for and strengthen the educational change. It may be in the reverse order that is social change, leading to educational change and educational change intensifying the need for and strengthening social change.

Broad Areas of Social Transformation Through Education can be Realized when:

1. Education is considered to be of immense help in realizing the ideals of democracy, national integration and industrialization.
2. Education is expected to change the values and attitudes of the people and to create in them an urge for the necessary motivation for social change.
3. It is generally believed that education provides necessary training in skills and occupation and thus, produce the needed competent personnel for better jobs.
4. Education is considered to be an important means of assisting people in making them aware of their weaknesses and enabling them to gain required knowledge in order to achieve progress in various areas of their life in a systematic and consistent manner. (Aggarwal 2006:154 - 156).

Nigerian Government's 7-Point Agenda: Import and Implementations

Nigerian government's 7-point agenda revolves round major government issues: Accommodation, Power and Energy, Food Security and Agriculture, Wealth Creation and Employment, Mass Transportation, Land Reform, Security plus Qualitative and Functional Education.

When you think of Nigeria's-point Agenda as a system over economy, you may start to think that poor living standard affects quality of productivity and socio-economic entities in Nigeria and that inequality sprayed in governance could harm citizens' moral and the terrain of Nigeria's identity. In the same vein when you think of Nigeria as a system over time, you start to realize that the decision our grand parents made about how to farm the land and continue to affect agricultural practice today and the economic policies we endorse today, this will have an impact on urban poverty when our children are adults. We also understand that quality of life is a system too. It is good to be physically healthy, but what if one is poor and one does not have access to education? It good to have a secure income, but what if one cannot afford it. The concept of Yar' Adua's 7-point Agenda is rooted in this sort of systems of thinking. It helps us understand ourselves and the Nigeria nation.

The problems faced by the Nigerian nation are complex and serious as such, these problems cannot be addressed in the same way they were created. But surely they can be addressed if the attitude of the Nigerian person is changed for good. President Umaru Yar' Adua's 7-point Agenda is pivotal. The challenge now is to support and strengthen the Nigerian system to actualize its huge potentials and fulfill its obligations to Nigerians.

It is imperative to note that the Federal government of Nigeria should promote private partnership as well as encourage private initiatives, establish a positive investment climate, develop infrastructural facilities, establish appropriate regulatory body, legislative policy environment and ensure a fair play of equitable distribution of resources and efficient tax regime. When all these are

adequately put in place, then the realization of the 7-point Agenda would not be a far cry. A brief discourse on some of the key areas of the 7-point Agenda would suffice for this paper.

Oil Sector

Nigeria has an estimated oil reserves of 32 billion barrels, and is the 6th largest producer of Crude Oil in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). At the current rate of production, these reserves can last about 35 years. In addition to oil, Nigeria has substantial reserves of natural gas and abundant solid mineral deposits, including coal, tin; gypsum, columbite, gold, marble, salt and sulphur and many other mineral deposits.

The point to note here is that, power and energy which is one of the cardinal points of the Yar Adua's 7-point Agenda is anchored on the oil sector. And for this cardinal point to be realized, then there should be infrastructural facilities like good roads, water and above all, there should be an appropriate regulatory body that would guarantee security and the equitable distribution of resources. For Nigeria to develop, the proceeds from the Nigerian Oil Sector should be used to train teachers and researchers who would bring their intellectual knowledge to bear positively on the Nigerian Oil Sector.

Health-Care

The focus here is on the review of health-care services that will provide a strong national health system that can deliver effective, good quality, and affordable services to all Nigerians. The emphasis here is that, a sound knowledge of the Nigerian health system is needed. The training of teachers and researchers who would handle the health crisis in Nigeria would save the Nigerian citizens from deadly diseases like Malaria, Tuberculosis, HIV/AiDS (Chinedu 2008) as cited in *niseriaworldfeatureartide*). Public enlightenment campaigns should be carried out by trained personnel so as to help realize the 7-point Agenda.

Poverty Incidence and Eradication

Available data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) indicate that poverty incidence in Nigeria in 1960 was about 15%. This grew to 28% in 1980 and 46% in 1985. By 1996, the poverty incidence was estimated to be about 66% in a population of about 110 million people. Additional data from the FOS (1999) further indicated that life expectancy at birth was 51 years, while literacy rate was 56%, and 70%. Up till today, the overwhelming majority of Nigerians lack access to portable water, health-care, electricity and employment. This is an indication of poverty.

In other to do away with poverty, one of Yar' Adua's 7-point Agenda is anchored on wealth creation and employment. The ultimate target of the Federal government on poverty eradication is the eradication of absolute poverty among the people of Nigeria. The eradication of poverty in Nigeria is therefore to ensure that all Nigerians have access to source of real income, high purchasing power, portable water supply, high nutritional food, basic health care among others. But the question is, can poverty be eradicated in Nigeria? This question demands critical thinking. What needs to be done is to ensure that every Nigerian has access to education which would make him or her employable. Once the Nigerian has something to do, the issue of poverty will die a natural death.

Summary

Ideally, teaching is supposed to be a noble profession but it has been neglected over the years, in Nigeria-Teaching is an interactive process involving four aspects: the teacher, students, learning process and the learning situation. The teacher creates the learning situation, the process is the interaction between the students and the teacher.

The paper has successfully discussed teachers' professional commitment. It has stated that a good teacher should be committed to his duties and ever ready to perform his functions as a teacher. There are certain categories of teachers. First, are those who have never made any commitment to teaching profession and are not willing to learn, and secondly those who parade themselves as teachers in the classrooms, but have no professional training.

Teacher Education As An Instrument For National Development And For The Achievement Of Nigeria's Seven-Point Agenda

The paper again talked about teachers' welfare scheme. If teachers are properly motivated, they would put in their best. The concept of teachers and education for self-reliance had been discussed. It has been noticed that education for self-reliance was forgotten some years back but now attempts have been made to reverse the trend in order to innovate educational sector. Education and social changes are mutually reinforcing and complementary. An educational change leads to a corresponding social change.

The Nigerian Federal government's 7-point Agenda has been fairly discussed touching nearly every important segment.

Recommendations

For Nigeria to achieve quality education for all teachers and for national development aimed at attaining the 7-points Agenda, the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- i. Quality Education for teachers must remain as the bedrock for building a revile nation that would cause economic growth and sustainable development.
- ii. For the 7-points Agenda to be achieved, the Nigerian oil sector must be treated with great concern. The Nigerian nation relies on oil which is the base upon which the superstructure rests.
- iii. Again, the Nigerian economy should be diversified as our over reliance on oil poses a threat to the actualization of the 7-points Agenda thereby hampering national development.
- iv. In other to achieve quality education for teachers, it is instructive to note that teachers welfare ranging from house allowances, car allowances, medical allowances and other allowances should be improved upon. This would boost the morale of the teachers thereby making them to give their best for national development.

Adequate funding should be provided for research. The teacher becomes a student when he carries out research. The findings of teachers' research when implemented religiously brings about national development.

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