

TEACHERS APATHY TO TEACHING: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF 'EDUCATION FOR ALL' BY 2015

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Abstract

Education is considered the most vital tool for human development. No wonder government recognizes education as the greatest investment that can bring about civilization, modernization, development and socio-economic progress. To realize these laudable objectives, world stake-holders in education declared 'Education for All' (EFA) for all countries in 1990. This declaration challenged countries to accord education the priority it deserves to ensure equity for all. 'Education For All' (EFA) was domesticated in Nigeria as 'Universal Basic Education (UBE) and its sole aim is to eradicate illiteracy among the populace by 2015. But effective education cannot take place in the absence of the teacher, the teacher being the spinal cord of every educational system at all levels. In spite of the prominence and pre-eminent position accorded teachers in the education industry, some teachers display apathy to teaching. The implication of teachers' lousy attitude to work can better be imagined. This paper attributes teachers' apathy to teaching to general dissatisfaction with the profession, poor salary, poor public image of teachers, inadequate instructional materials and physical facilities in schools and heavy teaching load. The paper recommends regular promotion as at when due, improved opportunities for professional growth, improved service conditions and improved school physical infrastructure and facilities among others as veritable means to restore teachers' confidence in themselves and interest in their jobs for the achievement of 'EFA' by 2015.

The importance of teachers and the role they play in the educative process are central to basic education particularly in the third world countries. In more advanced countries, there may be close substitutes for teacher – roles in the form of teaching machines with programmed instruction, but in the third

world countries such as Nigeria, teachers undoubtedly, remain the sole managers of knowledge (Lassa, 2000). The spinal cord of every educational system at every level is the teacher. When and if the teacher becomes broken, education becomes derelict and broken too. In spite of the rapid advance

in technology, the use of computer in education and the various applications of the information technology in education, the teacher, in any part of the world and at any level of the educational system, is still not replaceable (Ipaye, 2002). It is therefore indisputable that every educational system at every level still depends heavily on teachers for the propagation and extension of its programme. According to Ipaye (2002), maintaining and improving educational standard, giving educational content and context the desired and expected propagation, innovating the curriculum and giving it a new look, making it more relevant to the needs of the society and making education meet the expectations of the nation, getting it to truly reflect the philosophy of the nation and making it transmit the culture of the people all depend on the teacher. The curriculum and the syllabus are not worth more than the paper on which they are written without the teacher which is expected to translate the content into action, activities, practice and goals. The best curriculum could be ruined by an apathetic teacher whereas the worst curriculum could be made useful and productive by a highly motivated, dedicated, committed, willing, enthusiastic, and inspiring teacher. Pupils make up the school but teachers make education and learning possible.

The Role of the Teacher towards the Achievement of "Education for All"

The Jomtien declaration of 1990 was a landmark that established the need

for the entire world to address the issue of basic Education for All (EFA). It provided a policy direction for all the participating countries (including Nigeria) to achieve a properly defined benchmark by the year 2000 in providing 'Education For All' for children and adults. The declaration challenged countries to give education the priority it deserves to ensure equity for all, followed by the Education For All (EFA) conference of 28th April, 2000 in Dakar, Senegal which yielded the Dakar framework of Action for periodic monitoring of the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 benchmark in the last decade of the 20th century (Akudo, 2009). In order to achieve EFA's agenda, there was a follow-up effort by the E-9 countries that led to the meeting in Beijing in 2001 to address how development can be achieved through education. This is in line with the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) observation in 1987 which noted that education could help to break the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition and poor health. World Bank (1995) also emphasized that education contributes to the strengthening of the institution of civil society, to national capacity building and to good governance all of which lead to effective implementation of sound economic and social policies. According to United Nations MDGs (2006), access to education enables people to participate fully in the economy and society, to achieve universal primary education and

promote gender equality, and empower women.

The participation of Nigeria in the 1990 Jomtien declaration brought about a National Education Action plan tagged 'Universal Basic Education' (UBE) launched in 1999 which served as an indicator of EFA goal in Nigeria. Despite the fact that modest progress appears too have been recorded after the launching of EFA, we cannot deny the fact that there is the need for government to put more efforts towards achievement EFA by the year 2015. The question now is, what is the role of the teacher in all these? Among other things, the teacher impacts knowledge, assists the learner to acquire skills and some technical know-how; he transmits the culture and serves as a means of getting the learner to absorb needed attitudes. He does this through a variety of ways all of which are interrelated.

He motivates the pupils to learn and to develop interest in education. The professionally competent teacher explores, illustrates, asks questions, raises problems, manages the class, controls pupils disruptive behaviour, gives assignments, uses instructional materials, holds discussions, conducts projects, summarizes the points, evaluates and does many other uncountable things that would, when put together, enable his pupils to learn effectively. All these activities by the teacher assist him to mould the mind and life of his pupils, assist them to develop

ideas, gain and gather information, cultivate culturally acceptable habits and attitudes towards producing well-balanced individuals. Commenting on the importance of teachers, Aggrawal cited in Ipaye (2002:186) stated that "the destiny of a nation is shaped in the classroom and it is the teacher who is the very important instrument in moulding that destiny". In the UNESCO report on Twenty Years of Service to Peace (1946–1966: 35) the teacher is described as the "spark that fixed the whole development process, the key man in the drive to progress". Also, according to Adesina (1986:2) "The heart of Nigeria's educational system is the teacher. Whether at the primary, secondary or university level, the teacher is and would continue to be both a major indicator as well as the major determinant of quality education". In his own contribution to the indispensable role of teachers in the school system, Fafunwa (1972:79) stated that "the services of the teachers are to the nation, for they more than any other professional group, influence the lives of the Nigerian youths and therefore, the nation's future." The importance of the teacher in any educational endeavour can therefore, not be underestimated. This overall importance is further underscored by the simple fact that just as no country can rise above the level of its educational system, no system of education can rise above the quality of its teacher (NCCE, 2004). Teachers as educational engineers and technicians are therefore, the soul of any educational

system. Ezewu (1999:9) widened the scope when he asserted that:

An important sign of long-range health of a nation is the spirit and quality of its teacher. There is no substitute for teachers who are dedicated to their nation ... the future of the nation rests in the hands of teachers, for the qualities they possess today will inevitably be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow

According to Adams in Buseri (2012:2), "a teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops". Therefore, no nation in the world can do without teachers. Doing so now is not possible and it may not equally be possible in the near future, no matter the stage and state of technological development (Ipaye, 2002).

This paper attempted to identify the various factors that are responsible for teachers' apathy and tried to proffer measures to alleviate the problem.

Teachers' Apathy to Teaching in Nigeria

'Apathy', according to Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus for students (2010:16) is 'lack of feeling or interest', 'indifference'. Apathy among teachers has become a critical problem within the education system in Nigeria and according to Ipaye (2002), it keeps re-echoing in most educational conferences, workshops, seminars and at various other periodic meetings of professionals in education and, all

stakeholders in the education industry are getting worried over this development. Teachers apathy can simply mean non-chalant, indifference, lukewarm or lackadaisical attitude of teachers to teaching or the work which they are employed to do in the school. Teachers apathy to teaching can manifest in many ways and these many include; perpetual lateness to school, failure to draw meaningful lesson plans, unwillingness to teach in the classroom, inability to enrich the teaching-learning process with improvised instructional materials, gossiping in the staffrooms or elsewhere during lesson periods, shoddy preparation for lessons, hawking during classes, failure to attend to students learning problems, inability to conduct continuous assessment test for students, mark scripts and grade students accordingly. Another dimension is for a teacher to come early and sign at 7.30am and leaves the school without permission and then later shows up at 2.00pm for extra lessons which will attract extra income at the end of the term. It is very sad and indeed disheartening that teachers in various institutions of learning display apparent apathy to teaching and the consequences of this kind of attitude is far-reaching. There have been various instances of parents making complaints to school principals about truancy among teachers. Many parents, as a result have resorted to hiring teachers' for after school 'coaching' of their wards in order to cover areas of the syllabus that ought to have been covered. Some teachers are

known to have delayed proper teaching till after school hours to enable them charge extra fees from students.

The Genesis of Teachers Apathy to Teaching in Nigeria

The Nigerian teacher was hard working. He devoted his attention to education of the children under his tutelage. Whatever he knew, he taught with diligence and total devotion. He inculcated in his children the spirit of discipline, industry, moral uprightness, honesty, respect for elders and culture, the fear of God and love of one's country. Then, the teacher was contented with what he had, what he was, and how the society respected and honoured him. Parents co-operated with the teacher in the educative process, forging a link between the school and the home in the up-bringing of the child. Then, the teacher was truthful, pragmatic and 'in loco-parents' to those under his tutelage. In return, the teacher was respected by both children and parents. A lot has since changed, and these have given rise to teachers' apathy. The decline in the respect accorded the teacher, the ever degenerating conditions of service for the teacher, the economic recession in the country, students' population explosion in schools, politicization of education during civilian regimes, government take-over of schools and the introduction of de-boarding system all combined signaled the beginning of apathy among teachers in Nigerian schools. The period of the last civilian administration (between 1979–1983)

witnessed an unprecedented increases in the number of schools at all levels of education in the country. The development prompted mass recruitment of teachers (trained and untrained) who were not adequately catered for in terms of regular salaries and allowances and resulted in distraction of teachers who sorted for alternative means to augment their rather poor income and irregular pay. According to Ipaye (2002), the issue of teachers apathy heightened at this period.

Causes of Teachers' Apathy to Teaching

Ipaye (2002) enumerated some of the major causes of apathy to teachers as follow;

1) Poor Work Conditions: Teachers endure poor work conditions all over the country. His pay, allowances and overall remuneration are all poor. Everybody appears to be in sympathy with the teachers over this issues but nobody does anything to reverse the trend. Teachers monthly take-home salaries and allowances are too poor and unattractive, hence cannot sustain them or take them home in the face of rising cost of living. It appears some allowances once payable to teachers such as duty-post allowances, science and house master allowance have even been suspended. Though teaching is a public service, an efficient and hardworking, dedicated teacher should enjoy decent salary and

attractive service conditions as enjoyed by those with similar qualifications and experience in other government parastatals or industries. Teachers should equally be allowed to participate in making decisions on matters concerning their welfare and policies on education. Denial of these rights and privileges always lead to apathy.

- 2) **Lack of Regular Promotion Prospect:** Promotion is a way of rewarding people for their efforts and services at work places. It helps to boost the morale of teachers and motivates them to work harder. Frederick Hertzberg's two factor theory of job satisfaction pointed out that intrinsic job satisfaction is the primary determinant of job satisfaction and this aspect of job satisfaction is called motivators and they include recognition, the interest in the work itself, responsibility and achievement. Lack of promotion may lead to low morale and this may result in frustration, resignation and at times, pre-mature retirement from the job.
- 3) **Lack of Opportunity for Professional Advancement:** Most teachers show interest in staff development programme, not only because of challenges posed by the new curriculum in schools, but also as a channel for increased responsibilities, more prestige, enhanced status and increased pay.

As Owen in Ipaye (2002:190) noted "Motivation is generally considered to be rooted in human needs and without motivation, there would be no purposive, organized behaviour by the individual either at work or elsewhere".

- 4) **Lack of Professionalization of Teaching:** In Nigeria, teaching has not assumed its rightful place/status unlike the medical, legal and other allied professions. Hitherto, teachers who were held in high esteem are today looked down upon as people who cannot find better things for themselves. Professionalization will restore the needed prestige and honour in the society. Despite the clamour for professionalization of teaching, there are many untrained and unqualified teachers in the school system today, particularly in the private-owned schools. These people just stumbled into teaching since they cannot just do any other thing, hence making teaching their last resort. The author totally agrees with Hanson as was cited in Ipaye (2002:190) who noted that "As long as teaching remains so largely in the hands of the unqualified and untrained teachers, as long as teachers move from teaching into functionary jobs in government or industry, the image of teaching as a true reward for individual life and a truly significant life of social service will remain blurred". Teachers will continue to show apathy as long as

teaching remains unprofessionalized.

5) Poor Conditions of Infrastructure in Rural Areas:

Most of our schools are located in very remote and rural areas where social amenities such as electricity, potable water supply, good road network, relaxation centres, hospitals and recreational facilities are lacking. Most roads in the rural areas are not motorable and teachers have to trek long distances or depend on the mercy of Okada (motor-cyclists) to get to their duty posts. Most of these teachers may not be interested in teaching apart from being irregular in school. Adequate working condition does not only involve appropriate welfare provision but the environment for maximum performance. Until proper attention is accorded development of infrastructural facilities in rural areas, teachers will continue to dread working in the rural areas and as a result, continue to show apathy to teaching.

6) Inadequate Physical Facilities in School:

Teachers show more commitment to teaching when they work in a well ventilated classroom, equipped with attractive, functional furniture and all the required books for effective teaching, audio-visual materials and other stationery items are available to them. Unsatisfactory plant and buildings and lack of

equipment and materials have resulted in teachers low morale. Teachers show apathy when classrooms, laboratories, lecture theatres and technical workshops are grossly inadequate in terms of number, space, ventilation and furnishing. According to Ipaye (2002:191) "a clean, comfortable, orderly and aesthetically pleasing school plant makes an indirect contribution to teaching-learning process". In most schools today, buildings have become so dilapidated that they pose dangers to users. Teachers feel very reluctant to teach in such places particularly during stormy, windy rainfall.

7) Inadequate Instructional Materials:

The improved development in educational technology in recent times has paved way for availability of simple and sophisticated audio, visual, audio-visual-and reproductive materials for classroom instruction. Instructional materials, according to Ipaye (2002:191) "are the instructional tools ranging from improvised devices to highly complex and sophisticated machines specially designed to help teachers cope with specific teaching needs and situations". These resources include books and other printed materials, maps, globes, pictures, display, models, charts, graphics, community resources, teaching machines, computers, television, dial-access information systems,

students response system and other audio-visual materials and equipment. Most of these resources are virtually non-existent in most schools. Teachers will continue to show lukewarmness to teach as long as these materials are not accessible to them

- 8) Heavy Work Load:** Inadequate teaching staff has become a critical problem in our schools today. Most schools are short of teachers especially in critical areas such as English Language, science, mathematics, business studies etc. In such scenario, the only option for such school is to over-utilize the available teachers through excessive increase in their teaching load. A teacher who does so much without a commensurate increase in pay, may naturally become non-challant to his job. It is therefore necessary to either employ more teachers in order to reduce the work-load or, to pay those who are overloaded some excess load allowances as is presently done in the university.
- 9) School Management:** Since the success of the school manager depends on the availability of highly satisfied, competent and motivated teachers, the needs of the teachers must receive prominent attention of the school management. The school administrator should be fully aware that he is the leader of a group of teachers and as a result, he should be

sensitive to the welfare and professional needs of his teachers. He should first of all identify what the needs are and identify ways in which to promote their fulfillment. According to Morphet cited in Ipaye (2002:192) "Of the several major plans which administrators must develop for the operation of education, none is as critical to the success of the undertaking as those affecting the people responsible for implementation". Management should therefore make arrangement for the welfare and professional needs of teachers. Such effective administration of teachers needs will minimize teachers apathy towards teaching.

- 10) The Teacher:** The teacher himself could be a causative factor to apathy. Many teachers, as soon as they leave college or the university, stop reading and seeking after knowledge. With time, the little knowledge they have begins to decay and wither away until they are left with residual knowledge only. They therefore 'expire' or suffer 'intellectual atrophy'. If students get to know that their teacher is empty and cannot deliver, and that he recycles ignorance, they begin to resist and confront him. In self-defence, the teacher begins to avoid and cut classes, preferring rather to go to lower classes where the students' knowledge had not matched his own. Soon, he completely avoids

classes and his students, and apathy sets in.

11) The Government: With government take-over of schools, most teachers are employees of governments. According to Ipaye (2002), research has shown that most hardworking, dedicated and motivated teachers are found in private schools owned by individuals or organizations. They are well-paid, get their promotions on merit as at when due, carry minimum work-load, have small class-sizes and have the required materials and equipment/facility for work. More over, they work under a consistent policy. Since government who is the largest employer of labour had failed to provide teachers with favourable conditions attainable in private schools, it has to a large extent, contributed to apathy among teachers. Examples of government maltreatment of teachers abound. Teachers do their work without motivation, their promotion falls far behind schedule. Most of them receive nothing for working at given duty posts, they don't have opportunity any longer for refresher courses, in-service training or even study leave with pay. In governments' scheme of things, teachers are the least recognized. Though the argument could be that their (teachers) salaries and allowances are not lower than those of their counterparts in the civil service, teachers are the last to

be paid, and in situations when funds are not available to go round, their salaries remain unpaid.

12) The Society: The society has contributed to the development of teachers apathy to their jobs. The society in the recent past, was non-receptive to teachers, it does not recognize the person or worth of the teacher and in so doing, has not motivated teachers to do their work. In those days when the society accorded teachers a pride of place and the teacher was counted worthy, teachers worked hard to justify that perception. If society can restore and revive its interest and love for the teacher and stop looking down on teachers; if the society could make the child to respect his teacher, the teacher's morale could pick up again and his self-worth improved.

Conclusion

The realization of 'Education For All' is a vital tool in fulfilling the developmental dream of any nation since basic education is the foundation upon which any successful educational enterprise is based. The importance of the teacher and the roles they play in achievement of basic education cannot be over-emphasized. In the last few decades, there has been various manifestations of apathy in teaching amongst Nigerian teachers. This manifested in various forms such as lateness to school, failure to draw lesson plans, unwillingness to teach, gossiping

and hawking during school hours. Teachers' apathy has been attributed to such factors as general dissatisfaction with the profession, poor salary and lack of adequate motivation among others. To make sure that the objectives of 'EFA' are achieved through mitigation of apathy among teachers, there is the need for improved condition of service better facilities and instructional materials, opportunities for professional growth and proper motivation of teachers among others.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

- 1) There is the need to base promotion of teachers on competence, qualifications and productivity instead of the present system where promotion of teachers is biased and highly politicized.
- 2) Incessant transfer of teachers should be minimized since it does not only lead to interruptions in the school programme; it can also lead to job frustration and apathy to teaching.
- 3) In this age of rapid knowledge expansion with school curriculum becoming highly diversified, school management should strive to meet the welfare and professional needs of teachers by recommending and sponsoring them to workshops, seminars, refresher courses, conferences and exchange teaching programmes.
- 4) Conducive working conditions and atmosphere should be created for teachers through the provision of spacious, properly ventilated classroom, with heat-resistant ceiling boards, adequate instructional materials, suitable office space equipped with furniture and low teacher-student ratio should be maintained.
- 5) School administrators should maintain an open-door policy, be sensitive to the welfare needs of teachers, avoid fault-finding approach to supervision but rather see themselves as help-mates to their professional colleagues (teachers).
- 6) There is the need to employ more teachers in order to reduce their (teacher) workloads generally and improve student-teacher ratio.
- 7) Teachers should be properly motivated through salary increment, provision of housing loans to build their own houses, provided with residential quarters particularly in the urban areas, ensure transportation for them through the provision of a staff bus for each school, provide them with soft loans to buy cars, motor cycles and furnitures.
- 8) Government should ensure that dilapidated buildings and furnitures are pulled down, rehabilitated and

refurbished and that teachers no longer teach under stress or other make shift structures.

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