

PROCESS OF BOOSTING THE IMAGE OF TEACHERS IN NIGERIA FOR GOOD JOB PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT: *The paper x-rayed the process of boosting the image of teachers in Nigeria for good job performance. It started with the preamble on the importance of education and the nature of teacher education programme in Nigeria. The paper further looked at the image impression created about teachers and the teaching process. Finally, the paper highlighted the process of boosting the image of teachers in Nigeria, the obvious challenges and the way forward.*

KEYWORDS: Boosting; Image; Nigerian teachers; Job and Performance

INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic force for the socio-economic and political transformation of any society. According to Imogie (2010), no nation can develop to its fullest and keep pace with modern societal trends without an effective educational system. This is because quality education empowers its recipients with the appropriate skills, knowledge and values to adapt and contribute effectively in national development. So education is a vital instrument per excellence for national development; hence the need to consider the training and the building up of the key players- the teachers.

Teacher Education

National Policy on Education (2013:56) section 5, sub-section 93 stipulates the goals of teacher education thus:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system,
- Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- Help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

These goals are laudable and need to be accorded due attention as no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers. Teacher education is a planned and organized training given to would-be- teachers or in- service teachers to enable them to acquire the competences and expertise to become professionals. Education quality is determined by the quality of the teaching-learning process. Teachers interpret and communicate the curriculum to learners to ensure efficient and effective use of the country's investment in education. They also act as role models to the learners and transmit societal values from generation to generation; so the education and development of teachers are paramount to the country (FGN, 2013:61). This

calls for a boosting of the image of these curriculum implementers to avoid poor quality education outcomes that have been recorded in recent years.

Teachers as curriculum implementers play key roles in determining the 'what' and 'how' of education and to guide learners aright. They are trained to impart knowledge, skills and attitude to learners. Education is an industry that depends more on the stability of its staff and since teachers are the pillars of the educational system, its success depends on them. Their motivation, recruitment, training and re-training need to receive serious attention to boost their image if they are to be effective (Emesini, 2014).

Teachers and their Image Status in Nigeria

Image refers to the impression that a person, organization or a product gives to the public. On the other hand, ego is a sense of your own value and importance (Hornby 2010; 748, 470). In essence, one's value of his or her worth and the perception of the public means a lot for a progressive nation. Teachers as earlier mentioned are trained in the process and rigors of teaching through guided steps and programmes to acquire basic skills before launching fully into the teaching career. They are prepared through the teacher education programme that have been planned to enable them acquire the competences and expertise required of the job.

As nation builders, teachers need to perceive their importance in national development and have a good sense of worth that they have been deemed fit to contribute significantly in this dimension. They are to note that a teacher is a person engaged in interactive behaviour with one or more students for the purpose of effecting a change in those students (Aleyidieno cited in Imogie, 2010:5). In essence, teachers will have to develop this strong will that they are capable of developing the necessary changes in the learners to the satisfaction of the public who have entrusted the learners to their care.

Teaching entails total commitment of those involved in the process. According to Burton in Imogie (2010:7) "Teaching is the stimulating, guiding, directing and encouraging of learners which he explained thus:

Stimulating: Cause to motivate the learners to learn new things and create the urge to learn

Directing: Teaching is goal directing, leading to pre-determined behavior and learners' activities are controlled.

Guiding: To guide the learners to develop his capacities, skills, attitudes and knowledge to maximum, for adequate adjustment in the immediate and external environ.

Encouraging: This involves helping the learners to acquire maximum learning.

Teachers are expected to boost their worth and be highly rated by the public that they can stimulate, direct, guide and encourage learners in their care and have a name and a carrier to maintain. The learners in the classroom will perceive their worth by how they confidently dish out the learning contents for them to acquire education for life.

In their training to boost their image, teachers need to be exposed to these good educational principles of: encouraging contact between learners and teacher; develop reciprocity and cooperation among students; encourage active learning; giving prompt feedback; emphasizing time on tasks; communicate high expectation and respect diverse talents and ways of learning. Once a teacher can practice these principles zealously, he or she is said to have a sense of value

and building his or her image well before the public (Chickering and Gamson, 2005). According to the authors, working with these principles for a sound education involves using six powerful tools in the teacher-education preparation which are: activity; expectation; cooperation; interaction; diversity and responsibility. The teacher is vital in the communication process by providing the contents and the means of connecting to the other related experiences. This communication involves specifying the learning goals and objectives; learning materials; selection and giving instant feedback; supportive remediation; allowing a period of reflection for the assimilation and synthesis of experience. It takes a tactical teacher who knows and holds his or her worth high to attain these expectations, which leads to image boosting in the eyes of the stake holders.

In essence, in the preparation/training of teachers, emphasis should be laid on teaching decisions which have to take into account, the likely effects they might have on students' learning processes; students' conception of learning; students typical application to learning; the nature of the task and the teaching context (Rao, 2008:332). According to the author, manifestation of active knowledge is that the learner can act appropriately and independently in the application of that knowledge. A requirement for the acquisition of active knowledge by the learners is effective communication by the teacher which he or she does by the way the expected knowledge, skills attitude are presented to them.

Process of Boosting the Image of Teachers in Nigeria

Teaching as a noble profession needs individuals with noble ideals that they can impart same to others under their tutelage: This calls for the proper training of teachers to keep abreast of development in content and methodology. The quality of the educational system depends on the competence, commitment and motivation of teachers. Lassa (2000) made it clear that teachers are the main determinant of the quality of education. He stated that if they are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, immoral and anti-social, then the whole nation of Nigeria is doomed. The author further stated that if teachers are ignorant in their disciplines and impart wrong information, that they are not only useless, but dangerous to the educational system. As a result, the kind of teachers trained and posted to schools may well determine what the next generation will be. Lassa then warned that based on the above fact, that there is the need to ensure quality in teacher production in the country.

In their job performance, teachers are encouraged to see themselves as role models that would make or mar the learners by their self-image, ego and action. They are expected to master the knowledge content; teach effectively; understand the learners and inspire them; be resourceful, exercise authority judiciously; demonstrate sound moral judgment; good personality and friendly disposition and perform the roles of a professional. Mbakwem (2014) emphasized that a good and effective teacher must bring desirable changes in human interaction between teacher and students and between students. Strong (2008) therefore concluded that a teacher must be trained on how to assume ownership of the class; ensure successes and use personal experience to teach, communicate clearly and put students at the centre of learning while being conscious of his/her professional ego in character, teaching and dressing, among others.

The way the teacher presents the subject matter to the learners makes them to like or dislike the subject; it can also make them to love or hate school. Onwuka (1985) pointed out that the method of presentation of content is so important that teachers need to develop special methods of teaching various subjects. On the whole, they need to be prepared not only on how to handle the contents and methods, but develop self-image that they are ready to stand back and look

at themselves objectively, evaluate honestly their methods and results and learn from the experiences presented to the learners.

Challenges in the Boosting of Image of Teachers in Nigeria

As noble as teaching profession is, it is encumbered with a lot problems. Right from the onset, parents and the society's attachments to Medical, Legal, Engineering professions and their likes tend to lower the image of teaching profession. A teacher in the Nigerian context is looked down on and not held in honour as the above mentioned professions. Dailies and news commentaries run series of programmes for the other professions to the detriment of teaching profession. Scholarship awards to students by companies, individuals and politicians always target the enlisted professions and none is reserved for student-teachers at all levels to boost their morale. This trend is worrisome and has made people to enter the profession as the last resort or wait-on-for another job.

Reiterating this challenge, Anuforo (2007) enlisted the following as major challenges to teaching profession that normally dampen the moral of teachers:

- Disparity in the qualifications of the practitioners
- Poor condition of service.
- Unconducive working environment.
- Inadequate funding of the educational sector
- Governments' inability to put into effect, some of the excellent policies designed to make teaching attractive.
- Lack of effective control due to the non-existence of teachers' professional association (p.16).

These ugly trends in the teaching profession were captured this way in the National Policy on Education (2013:62) "that one of the major issues affecting teaching profession development is the mismatch between qualification and teachers' skills and competences". Furthermore, the document lamented that low public esteem and remuneration have adversely affected the recruitment and retention of quality teachers. Again, low remuneration and delayed salary payment, high attrition rate, low morale and motivation to teach cum endless struggles to make ends meet have led to low command of respects from students; so teachers' position as role models are being jeopardized. In the long run according to Bolman and Deal (1991), teachers are underpaid, overworked and not given enough support/ assistance in the classroom. These trends urgently call for a way forward as the destinies of learners in the Nigerian classroom are at stake. This is because teachers are not putting in their best as a result of the envisaged challenges; hence the need to look for the way forward in boosting the image of the teachers in Nigeria.

The Way Forward in Boosting the Image of Teachers in Nigeria.

A teacher as an image maker engages the children and their parents actively because, there is a focus on the impact his/her teachings makes on the lives of the learners and consequently, on their parents. The role of the teacher is not only limited to the classroom, but also to the global setting. According to Hacsí (2002), the teacher's image is projected through the learning and teaching which is visible to all, thereby acting as agents of change in any given society. To assume this wonderful role, the teacher needs assistance in the classroom; time away from children; ongoing collaboration with colleagues; mentorship and research tools to practice and

to grow professionally so as to stay abreast of the changing and competing marketplace of modern schools and professions (Bolman and Deal, 1991).

Based on the aforementioned, teachers' educational development is very important and must touch on these key areas: orientation and induction; continuing professional development; school leadership training, recruitment and appointment. Also, framework for teaching standards and incentives to attract and retain quality teachers need to be put in place. It is through professional development/incentives that instructional quality can be enhanced, which leads to higher students' achievement and overall educational growth (FGN, 2013:63-64). In line with this, Osam and Ekpo (2014) emphasized on the new status of the Nigerian teachers as the Nigerian government is giving the teaching profession its due attention which every teacher should be proud of. This attention becomes necessary due to the decaying educational system of Nigeria which can only be equated with the quality of teachers within it. The government has made it a law that only trained individuals can teach. Also, the assurance and regulations of Teacher's Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) of job security; Teachers Salary Structure (TSS); ethical reformation in the profession; high status of teachers in Nigeria and fulfilling of professional requirements have given a good boost to teachers' image in Nigeria.

TRCN plays key roles in making teachers reach their zenith through registration and licensing of teaching; organization of internship programmes; maintenance of registers for teachers; conduct of Continuing Mandatory Profession Development (CMPDE) and enforcing rules for teachers (Ajaero, 2012:5). Having been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring quality and control in teacher training, TRCN has now embarked on continuous registration and licensing of professionally qualified teachers, in addition to given of deadline to those who are not professionally trained in the system to update themselves or be shown the way out. This act is boosting the image of teachers and would-be-teachers, as it is no more business as usual and stepping board for take-off to other professions. In a bid to ensure this quality in the teaching profession, Anuforo (2007) explained that the Federal Government of Nigeria created commissions and agencies to oversee every aspect of education at all levels like: Nigeria Educational ,Research and Development Council (NERDC) to oversee the academic programmes of the pre-primary and secondary schools; the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for Colleges of Education nation-wide; the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) to oversee the affairs of Colleges of Technology and Polytechniques and National University Commission (NUC) to oversee University programmes (p.22).

Again, the Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced other image boosting steps in teacher education like placing of teacher education under tertiary education, which makes the minimum entry requirements into the teaching profession to be Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). This implies that teacher education programme now has its contents offered in the form of high level theories, wide content of knowledge and high level technical skills (Ajaero, 2012:5). With these measures according to Ajaero, teaching profession is now recognized globally like any other profession. The author also noted that another reform introduced that would boost the image of teachers and their public image is the requirement for fresh graduate teachers to undergo an internship programme for two years (post-NCE) and one year for (Post-B.Ed) to be organized by the TRCN. At the end of the internship, the graduates would be awarded professional certificates and licenses to operate anywhere in the world as professionally certified teachers.

This reform have not been implemented for now, as fresh graduates are inducted into the teaching profession and licensed through a brief ceremony organized by TRCN at institutional level. Anuforo (2007) reiterated that there are prescribed minimum standards and recommendations on the quantity and quality of manpower needed in the educational sector. As a result, teachers' attitude to work and ego in the teaching profession are changing for the better as their public perceptions are enhanced.

CONCLUSION

As nation builders, teachers are the determinant of any sound educational system. They can make or mar it; hence the need to have a re-think on how to handle and perceive this sensitive workforce. Their self-worth and image can determine how well they will play their roles. Again, the public perception tells more on the image or impression created about them and their works. It then means that teachers or would-be-teachers image is paramount for their work outputs.

To boost their image and ego, the Federal Government has put in place some measures to ensure quality in the educational system like: benchmarks; expectations; training and retraining programmes; internship and licensing, among others. These steps became necessary to salvage the educational system and the noble profession-teaching in order to put it on the same footing with the other professions. The introductions of the regulatory body-TRCN, the new salary structure (JSS) and regulating entry into the profession are good measures to boost the image of teachers in the educational system of Nigeria.

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