

## TEACHER QUANTITY IN NIGERIA: WHAT QUALITY?

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper focuses attention on Teacher Quality in Nigeria: What Quality? An historical portrait of teacher quantity in Nigeria is undertaken. This presentation gives an insight, into poor quality of prospective teacher trainees, poor quality of teachers of teachers, poor quality of training programmes/curriculum, poor implementation strategies of teacher education programmes, governments and society's role in poor quality of teachers amongst others*

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher, Quantity, Nigeria

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers, the world over, are acknowledged as the pivot of effective teaching and teacher induced learning. In emphasizing the crucial place of teachers in the educative process, Allen in Hodenfield and Stinnett (1961:21) noted that in making learners acquire knowledge "... Books can help. So, can laboratories. So, can numerous other types of learning materials. But always there stands the teacher... What he knows can make a difference. What he does not know can be

an irreparable loss.” Furthermore, Ukeje (1986) in laying emphasis on the quality of the calibre of teachers who can positively impact on learning, observed that excellent teachers inspire learners not tell them or inform them or teach them.

Given the invaluableness of the quality of teachers in determining the quality of education and in deed the quality of the products of the educational system, this chapter explores the quantitative history of Nigeria's teaching staff which today does no longer constitute a problem to teaching as teachers are available in adequate quantity, but laments that the quality of the teachers are too poor. The effects of poor quality teachers on school systems effectiveness are highlighted.

### **The Concepts: Teacher Quantity and Teacher Quality**

In the context of this exposition, teacher quantity refers to the adequacy of the number of teachers required to man the many classrooms in Nigeria's educational institutions. It connotes teacher availability unmindful of their quality. On the one hand, teacher quality refers to the fitness, suitability, effective demonstration of professional competence of available teachers in the appropriate discharge of their teaching job requirements as measured by teacher effectiveness indicators. The availability of teachers in adequate number (quantity) does not always entail good teacher quality.

### **An Historical Portrait of Teacher Quantity in Nigeria**

The introduction of schools in Nigeria beginning in 1842 was not an action that was deliberately planned. Rather it was an afterthought of the Missionary bodies which in their evangelical or proselytization mission thought that the establishment of schools would enhance their chances of recording more success in their bid to win souls via-conversion. The Missionary bodies' incidental view of the establishment of schools-an indispensable tool for their mission - effective evangelization - gingered the proliferation of schools through which the missions scrambled for adherents. According to Nwachukwu (1986:11):

*The belief was that the more schools that were established, the more students that would be recruited and the more converts would be made. Each church believed that it would be unusual for a pagan child to go through the long years of schooling without being converted to the religion taught in the school.*

The resultant effect of the competition of the Christian Missions to establish schools, for their catechistical, evangelical and educational functions, was the phenomenal expansion of schools that, among other things, lacked adequate teaching personnel. The acute dearth of teachers was such that the early teachers from Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (now Ghana), Gambia, the West Indies, America and Britain could not cope with.

In an attempt to off-set the dearth of trained teachers, as “...no trained teachers were available locally... (in Nigeria)” (Adesina, 1977:5), the monitorial system was adopted whereby students in the top classes who showed signs of academic promise or excellence were used to teach the other children in the school. According to the revelation of Ocho (1986:63), “this system (the monitorial) made it possible for one teacher to man a school of up to four classes with a possible population of over 100”. Under the circumstances of poor quality teachers, disproportionate

teacher-pupil ratio, the quality of education was not only too poor, the need for the provision of teachers and the establishment of teacher training institutions became more than ever before very imperative.

It needs be mentioned at this juncture that from the inception of schools in Nigeria, there was poor staffing of the schools and in fact insufficient number (or quantity) of teachers, let alone trained and qualified teachers. The premier teacher training college in Nigeria was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1859 at Abeokuta. In 1867, this institution was transferred to Lagos on account of the people's hostility to the European Missionaries (Solaru, 1964; Fajana, 1978) and finally to Oyo in 1896 where the institution was re-named St. Andrew's (Teacher Training) College. Despite the founding of the first teacher training college in 1854 and the many teacher education institutions which were established in Nigeria between 1859 and 1991, Nigerian schools hadn't the sufficient quantity of teachers to man the classrooms. This is without prejudice to the fact that Nigeria has over eighty teacher education institutions - 25 teacher manufacturing Universities, 54 Colleges of Education, a few Polytechnics with programmes of teacher education and a countable number of teacher training colleges (of the secondary education class) plus the self-imposed teacher production Nigeria Teachers' Institute. Nigeria has the highest (number of) teacher education institutions in Africa." (Mezieobi, 1996:65).

The dearth of sufficient quantity of teachers to 'teach' in Nigerian classrooms and what to do to stem this educative cancer engaged the attention of educationists until the mid-1990s. Generally speaking, one can say, with a measure of certitude, that Nigerian schools today have adequate quantity of teachers. There are five confirmatory indicators of this claim. They are:

1. Teacher training institutions of the secondary education category have been phased out in the Southern parts of Nigeria.
2. The Sandwich programme of some teacher education institutions such as those of the Anambra State College of Education, Nsugbe has been scrapped.
3. The number of students admitted in the existing programmes of teacher education institutions is getting slimmer and slimmer (or remarkably reducing) with the passage of years into the 21st century.
4. The agencies of the political class or government educational policy formulators, education policy implementers, teaching, school management, no longer harp on teacher quantity as a factor militating against teaching in the schools. In fact, States such as Enugu State - which have overflowing number of teachers in their school system have in 1996 discharged teachers who are non-indigenes of the state.
5. Even qualified teachers roam the streets today in search of teaching positions in schools.

### **Teacher Quantity: What Quality**

Quantitatively Nigeria has sufficient numbers of teachers today. But in Coombs (1969) prophetic curse, these teachers are no more than "enough willing warm bodies to keep order in the classroom". In the context of present day educative scene in Nigeria, the sufficient quantity of teachers in our schools are not even willing to keep order in the classroom. But whether or not they are teachers willing to teach, the truth is that despite the fact that we have over-subscribed

to teacher education institutions, our teachers are of poor quality. Their poor quality does not manifest in poor teaching which “effects... (are) not immediately observable” (Ukeje, 1986:48), but static educational (and invariably national development and underdevelopment and aspersions cast on the entire education system in relation to the real quality of what we really do in schools).

Now that the era of search for quantity of sufficient number of teachers in Nigeria is over with the closing years of the 20th century, time was apt to take a critical look at the poor quality of teachers in Nigeria with a view to providing a calibre of qualitative teachers for the 21st century schools and beyond. The pertinent question is where lies the problem of poor quality teachers in Nigeria? This broad question generates other subsidiary but insightful and direction-providing questions. They are:

1. Is the problem with the quality of the prospective teacher educations or trainees?
2. Is the problem with the quality of the teachers of teachers to be?
3. Is the problem with the quality of training programmes or curriculum?
4. Is the problem blameable on implementation strategies of teachers' education programmes?
5. Has the government a hand in the poor quality of teachers and teaching?
6. Is poor quality teaching a function of the financial or inflationary pressures on the teachers?
7. Is the society to blame, in any way, for the poor quality of teachers and the concomitant poor teaching?
8. Are poor quality teachers and poor teaching a function of un-professionalization of teaching in Nigeria?

The foregoing questions stir the following comments; as all of them in concert contribute to the poor quality of teachers and poor teaching.

### **Poor Quality of Prospective Teacher Trainees**

The pathetic condition of teaching and teachers in Nigeria is such that “most good secondary school graduates generally select teaching as a last alternative in their choice of vocations” (Ukeje, 1986:48). In the absence of first rate or good quality prospective student teachers for admission into teacher education programmes, poor quality materials are admitted into our teacher education institutions to be trained as teachers. Mezieobi (1996:66) outlined the source routes from where the poor calibre of teacher trainees is drawn as:

- a) Students with very low cut off points in University Matriculation Examination (UME) when compared with candidates who gained entry into law and medicine.
- b) Those who could not make it into other disciplines of their first choice but would take to teacher education rather than stay home.
- c) Those who applied for admission into other disciplines but for no choice of their found theirs names in Education list of admitted applicants.
- d) Those who initially thought of using Education as a stop gap to other disciplines but failed to accomplish this desire.

- e) People who are not educable as teachers but found themselves into the teacher education institutions or programmes on account of extraneous variables - ethnicity, political expediency, godfatherism, government sponsored federal character or quota system or catchment area policies.
- f) Those who failed their pre-degree/remedial examination and are sponsored by either the University or Government to enrol in teacher education programme.

The poor quality of teacher trainees, in a teaching climate like ours where there is pervasive indifference to learning the skills of the job come out of the teacher education programme as low quality calibre of teaching personnel.

### **Poor Quality of Teachers of Teachers**

There is teaching quackery in most teacher education institutions in Nigeria. Mezieobi (1996:66) highlighted the poor quality of teachers of teachers in Nigeria's teacher education institutions thus:

*Most of the teachers are no-professional teachers. Apart from the professional teachers who teach the Faculty/School/College of Education based and controlled professional education courses in the Universities and the Colleges of Education, all other 'teachers' of teachers in the service departments are no Professional (teachers). The latter category of 'teachers' are concerned whole and entire with content transmission without any commitment to how the content should be taught (let alone understanding the psychology of learning and of the learner).*

When “our 'teachers' are largely produced by non-professional teachers - Historians, Political Scientists, Sociologists, Economists, Accountants, Scientists, Agriculturists and in some cases Lawyers - not professionally trained and certificated teachers (Mezieobi, 1996:66) coupled with the fact that these non-professional teachers and the professionally qualified teachers do not avail themselves of in-service-education opportunities on regular basis to enable them finetune or improve their teaching competencies and skills and come in contact with new developments in the discipline of education, it would be miraculous if the teacher products of these professionally unqualified and professionally inactive teacher trainers would have anything to show for quality or teacher effectiveness in all its ramifications. Poor quality teachers of teachers reproduce themselves. Fafunwa (1971:82-83, 84) lends supports to the teacher-type-reproduce same-product-kind when he noted that “no adequate training can take place without competent teachers to handle the programmes... poor teacher tends to reproduce their own kind just as good teachers tend to reproduce their own kind”.

### **Poor Quality of Training Programmes/Curriculum**

The curriculum in use in the teacher education institutions on Nigeria is not only credential acquisition oriented, the curriculum emphasizes theory with a passing attention to actual teaching practice competencies and skills. Most of the graduates of the teacher education institutions come out of the programme barren with teacher effectiveness and teacher behaviour indices and may not know their legal rights in relation to employment, tenure, staff discipline as well as legal prescriptions on student discipline and punishment. No doubt, the existent teacher education programme has a lot to contribute to the poor quality of teachers in Nigeria.

### **Teacher Education Programme: Poor Implementation Strategies**

The poor-quality teacher situation in Nigeria may be anchored on poor programme implementation strategies. This is manifest in:

1. Absence of teacher commitment to programmes implementation.
  2. Inadequate teacher programme implementation monitoring/or supervisory mechanism.
  3. Inadequate teacher education programme funding.
  4. Haphazard teaching practice sessions consequent according to Okeke (1985) on lack of adequate teaching facilities in practicing schools, haphazard supervision of student - teachers, and lack of technical know-how on the part of the staff supervisors.
  5. The 2-4 years' teacher preparation programmes do not adequately prepare teachers for their teaching job. Okeke (1985:147) lends import to this fact when he noted that: "The professional content of courses in teacher education programme rarely amounts to thirty weeks of study. Usually, there is too much ground to be covered in teacher preparation programme and too little time in which to cover it."
  6. Apart from certification by the individual teacher education institutions in Nigeria, there is no professional body to attest to the fact that those who are being certificated as having mastered the teaching skills competencies and behaviours have actually mastered them to warrant letting them loose to practice.
  7. Government lip service to teacher education programme implementation.
  8. The erroneous thinking that teacher preparation ends with initial institutional teacher training exposure to the neglect of the in-service teacher education component.
- When teacher education programmes are not effectively and satisfactorily implemented to elicit dividends, poor quality teachers and teaching are inevitable concomitants.

### **Governments Role in Poor Quality Teachers and Teaching**

There are six ways in which government contributes to poor quality teachers and teaching. They are:

1. Governments' Federal Character or quota system's and mass schooling policy may lead to the admission of uneducable people into teacher education institutions.
2. Members of the political elite may influence the admission of poor quality materials into teacher education institutions.
3. Government's non-payment or irregular payment of teachers' salaries and fringe benefits may induce teacher low morale, job dissatisfaction, teacher truancy, absenteeism and lack of commitment, all of which impair quality teaching. Job dissatisfaction may induce teacher poor quality and invariably poor teaching.
4. Governments inadequate funding of teacher education institutions which manifest in inadequate instructional facilities, equipment and materials and at times the recruitment of the right quality of teachers at the time of need.
5. Government's lethargy in prioritizing teachers' continuous professional development as a working education policy to complement teacher pre-service.
6. Government deep-seated negative attitude or passing concern to matters affecting teachers and teaching contribute in no small way to poor quality teachers and poor teaching.



### **Poor Quality Teachers: A Function of The Economic Doldrum**

The good education policies of the Nation as they relate to teacher education and the production of high quality teachers, coupled with the putting in place of well-articulated policy implementation machinery may be marred by the contemporary world-wide economic depression which has emasculated the financial resources of the government. The result is that monies are no longer available in desired amount to realize a good number of government policies including those affecting the production of good calibre of teachers.

### **Poor Quality of Teachers: The Society's Role**

The Nigerian society is contributing to the poor quality of teachers in the following ways:

1. The image of teachers and teaching in the Nigerian society is too poor. Teaching is stigmatized as a never-do-well 'profession'. This labelling dissuades parents from encouraging their children with best brains to take to this vocation. To many Nigerian parents, teaching is a job of last resort for their children. When we cannot attract good quality brains into teaching, we make do with the mediocre willing ones.
2. The conscious mass of the population of Nigerians are aware that all is not well with the quality of our teachers and teaching. Yet in their disenchantment, they have watched the situation helplessly in pretentious quietude. Individuals, groups, organizations, philanthropists' communities and the Nigerian society at large appear to be in a hypnotic state without contributing substantially to saving the poor teacher quality and poor teaching crises in Nigeria.

Given good teacher education institutions and society/community relations, the latter can do a lot to contribute to enhancing teacher quality even only in the provision of facilities and equipment.

### **Poor Quality Teachers: Product of Certificate for Sale Sandwich Programmes**

The lack of educative seriousness of teachers and students alike during sandwich programme sessions and the very short duration of the programme, coupled with the indiscriminate mounting of these sandwich programme even in secondary schools without teacher education facilities for revenue generation/purposes portend poor quality teacher products. Professor Nwagwu (1988:12) in lamenting over the poor-quality teachers that are produced via the "Commercialization (of) our teacher education programme", cautions that "if official action is not taken now, we would have completely destroyed standards (or quality) in teacher education."

### **Poor Quality Teachers: A Function of Absence of Professionalism of Teaching**

Poor quality teachers and teaching in Nigeria may be as a result of the fact that teaching in Nigeria is not yet professionalized in the strictest sense of the word. A quality control Teacher Council that would prescribe certification prerequisites, operational teaching professional ethics, teaching practice standards and policies, licence practice, institute practice monitoring machinery, and act as a pressure group to enhance practice may contribute to engineering quality teacher behaviour and quality teaching.

We cannot afford to neglect the quality of our teachers for without quality teachers we cannot have good educational institutions that are capable of producing the right calibre of functional school products who would via the skills, competencies, knowledge acquired in schools, under

the guidance of quality teachers, move the nation forward in terms of scientific and technological development. The indispensability of quality teachers in the educative process and in the overall striving for national development entail that the teacher “must be educated properly (with emphasis on quality) in order to build a really greater tomorrow” (Ukeje, 1986:48-49).

While educational policy attention is to be re-focused on improving the quality of teachers in Nigeria among other things we should not ignore other factors which impact positively on the instructional process. These include the school administrators, teaching, the administrative process, curricula and instructional facilities and materials. Goodlad (1983) sues for improving all of these (including the quality of the teacher) together if quality schools and invariably quality education must be realized.

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