

The Reluctant Teacher Versus The Teacher To Remember: A Contextual Challenge For Improved Teachers' Welfare In Nigeria

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Abstract: The paper reviews the issue of teacher's welfare and the contextual challenges that need to be addressed while making a case for improved welfare package for teachers in Nigeria. It describes the characteristic features of two groups of teachers; the reluctant teacher and the teacher to remember, the scenarios differentiating the two, and the strategies for improving the performance and productivity of teachers so that the reluctant ones can effectively transit to the stage of teachers to remember and become better motivated to perform. The paper reveals that the observed challenge is complex and has serious implications for the provision of improved welfare package for the two groups of teachers; the reluctant teacher and the teacher to remember.

Keywords: Reluctant Teacher, Teacher to Remember, Challenge, Improved Teachers' Welfare, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is a noble profession all over the world. Teachers play very pivotal role in any society. Nobody, no country can claim to be anything without the impact of teachers. Incidentally, teachers in many countries, Nigeria inclusive, are not valued. They are paid less respect, less money than those in many other comparable professions. This is corroborated with Calista Ezeaku's (2016) remarks that, the story of how teachers' salaries are owed for months in Nigeria is no longer news. He goes further to say that successive governments deem it unnecessary to invest in the Education Sector resulting in poor funding, staffing and motivation of teachers.

Be that as it may, we cannot pretend to be unaware of the fact that in actual practice and on the field, "there are teachers and there are teachers". This implies that when the issue of improved teachers' welfare comes up, not every practising teacher may be qualified. This is because in actual practice, there are reluctant teachers, just as we have teachers to be remembered, by virtue of their comportment and disposition to the profession and commitment to the job.

It is therefore pertinent to look at this issue as a contextual challenge that needs to be addressed while making a case for

improved welfare package for teachers in Nigeria. Hence, this presentation reviews the characteristic features of the two groups of teachers, the scenarios differentiating the two, the contextual challenge, and the strategies for improving the performance and productivity of teachers so that the reluctant ones can effectively transit to the stage of teachers to remember and become better motivated to perform.

II. WHO IS THAT RELUCTANT TEACHER?

Lawal (2014) observed that the issue of reluctant teacher is one issue that we cannot pretend to be uncommon in our education system. The reluctant teacher exists in our education system. Patrascu (1995), described a reluctant teacher as a "teacher who does not want to and/or cannot (readily) accept change".

Landsleit, Moore & Simmons (2008) further describe reluctant teachers as those who often avoid students who do not look, act, or talk like them. They may categorize such students as being at risk, having behaviour problems, or being un-teachable. Ladson-Billings (2006) supporting this position on reluctant teachers, indicates that teachers who define students in such terms create a classroom environment that is

no longer a place of learning and high expectations, but rather a place rooted in control and management. Such conditions will not help the reluctant learner become successful.

Again, Shaikh (2012) expatiated on the definitions highlighted in the preceding paragraph by describing a reluctant teacher as one that has no desire to try anything new – it either does not interest him/her, or h/she does not see how it can possibly improve the way h/she teaches. He added that despite the whole school, and even the whole profession heading in a particular direction, the reluctant teacher does his/her bit in holding back the tide.

Some of the common types of reluctant teachers and the mechanisms of their reluctance have been described by Preslock (2010) to include those teachers who:

- ✓ Don't want to change- although, they could be self-confident, they are usually stubborn and do not have any risk for security and self-esteem.
- ✓ Don't understand the necessity for change (WHY)- They are too formal, and do not see any need for change, particularly when they have remained on one salary for too long a time.
- ✓ Want to, but don't understand the mechanisms of change (HOW)- They lack clear understanding of principles, aims, objectives and practical procedures (if any) of handling their lessons and the class.
- ✓ Would like to, but don't try (postpone trying) because of constraints- These could be in terms of class time, personal time and finance, leading to excess load and other ventures.
- ✓ Try to, but aren't very successful and give up (and feel guilty)- probably because of inability to match new ideas with old realities, students' reluctance, lack of conviction and feelings of insecurity.

With this scenario Lawal (2014) remarked that the characteristics of a reluctant teacher are capable of rubbing off their learners. The non-committal posture of such teacher can make some of his/her learners become reluctant learners. This is because the teacher's noticed characteristics can bring low motivation on the part of the learners.

You therefore find such students not coming to class at the right time or even total absenteeism. Even when they are in class, they may not give proper and adequate attention to the little teaching to be done by the reluctant teacher. Their relationship with the teacher and even their peers will not be that of mutual understanding, which unfortunately is highly required for positive social development. H/she can never be a teacher to remember by the learners, as it shall be elucidated in the next few paragraphs.

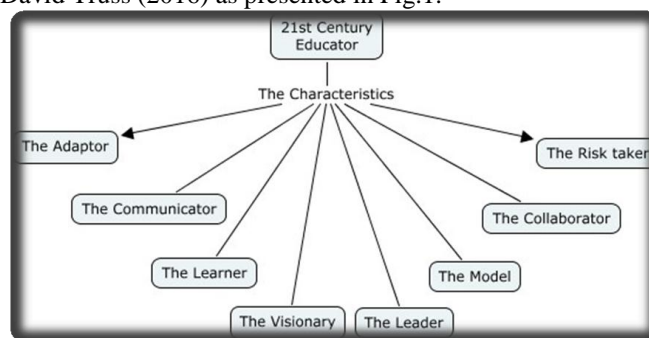
III. WHO IS THAT TEACHER TO REMEMBER?

The teacher to remember is that teacher who is approachable to his/her students; one who really understood his/her students. H/she knows how to really listen, treat students with respect and makes every student feel like one of their own. He/she is a reflective practitioner who is aware of his/her environment and has information on the resources available for professional development and learning.

The teacher to remember is one who has information on the professional literature, colleagues, professional associations and professional development activities at her beck and call. He/she is one who is able to read, understand and apply articles and books about current research, views, ideas and debates regarding best teaching practices. H/she understands that the community is a resource and develops active partnerships among teachers, parents/guardians and community leaders. Such teacher effectively carries the community along through respectful/reciprocal communication.

Such teacher is a role model who students would want to grow up to be like. H/she would always aspire to make a difference in his/her students' lives. He/she is ever ready to show them that hard work pays off, and that they should never give up. Their lessons will continue to have an effect on their students' lives throughout their lifetime.

The teacher to remember shares the same characteristics with the 21st Century Educator that was described by Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Rod Fee, Kim Cofino, Doug DeKock, & David Truss (2016) as presented in Fig.1.



Source: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Rod Fee, Kim Cofino, Doug DeKock, & David Truss (2016)

Figure 1: Characteristics of the 21st Century Teacher

As an adaptor, the teacher to remember is able to adapt the curriculum and the requirements to teach to the curriculum in imaginative ways. H/she adapts easily to a dynamic teaching experience and when it all goes wrong in the middle of a class; when the technologies fail, h/she ensures that the show must go on.

As a visionary teacher h/she looks at others' ideas and envisages how such can be used in his/her own class. The teacher to remember makes links that reinforce and value learning in other areas, and leverage other fields to reinforce his/her own teaching and the learning of his/her students.

As a collaborator, h/she shares, contributes and invents, in partnership with colleagues and others outside the immediate school environment.

As a risk taker, h/she is ever ready to take risks and some times surrender him/herself to the students' knowledge, as h/she is ready to put some trust in his/her students.

The fact that knowledge, understanding and technology are fluid and dynamic, implies that they are evolving and changing. So a teacher to remember is one who is ever ready to change and learn as the horizons and landscape change. H/she goes beyond learning just how to do it, but also know how to facilitate it, stimulate and control it, moderate and manage it. This makes him or her a communicator who is

fluent in tools and technologies that enable communication and collaboration.

There is no doubt that an understanding of the foregoing description of a teacher to remember by his/her students would normally elicit some positive comments like ones extracted below:

Our teachers are our best friends, mentors, philosophers and guides. Therefore we want to say thank you to our teachers, who always believed in us and provide the best knowledge to us. We will always be grateful of our teachers' support in every situation and when we need it
Source: <http://www.dailysmscollection.in/2016/08/Happy-Teachers-Day-Quotes.html>

You inspire me to succeed, you support me when I need guidance, you push me to further my knowledge, you have given me a strength and encouragement
Source: www.dgreetings.com

Dear Teacher, Whatever you taught me remains with me at all times. No one can ever steal it from me. I am thankful to God for blessing me with a Teacher like you. Happy Teachers Day 2016!
Source: <http://www.dailysmscollection.in/2016/08/Happy-Teachers-Day-Quotes.html>

IV. THE CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGE THAT MUST BE X-RAYED BEFORE A SINCERE IMPROVED TEACHERS' WELFARE CAN EVOLVE

The foregoing discussion paints a picture of two groups of teachers that can be found in our schools, with both groups demanding for improved welfare package. However, it must be pointed out that this presentation is not necessarily looking out for utopian teachers in our schools. Nevertheless, a pertinent question that needs to be raised at this juncture is "can we expect a general application of a welfare package for both groups of teachers in our school system? Closely related to this is another question, which is "what can be done to promote the presence of more of "teachers to remember" in our schools while equally reducing the practices of the reluctant teacher?"

The answers to these questions are obvious. Hence, stakeholders in the Education Sector would first need to evolve a policy that can help sift the shaft from the grains before we begin to talk of improved welfare package for teachers. Thank God the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is afloat on this and has become more proactive in recent times. The Council's mechanisms for promoting high ethical standards in the profession, which include Teachers Investigating Panel (TIP), the Teachers Tribunal (TT) and a host of others, are capable of raising professional ethical standards and productivity among teachers in Nigeria.

The contextual challenge can be further explored with another question, which is, how do you provide improved welfare for a reluctant teacher alongside a teacher to remember? This question is germane because the latter group of teachers is likely to become demoralised. This is particularly when they know that their colleagues' characteristic laissez-faire disposition to their job and the

profession no more matters, when it comes to motivation and improved welfare.

What can one say of a teacher who came into the profession because he/she could not gain admission for any of his/her initially preferred choice but ended up in the Faculty of Education and later got a job as a teacher after trying the banking sector, civil service and other jobs. When this reluctant teacher is compared with another teacher (a teacher to remember) who inspires his/her students, entertains them, and makes them learn a ton when they don't know it, one would naturally not expect them to be equally treated for improved welfare.

For any intervention on improved package not to be misdirected, the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for monitoring our schools through the whole school evaluation would need to be reengineered and reinvigorated. The establishment and activities of Directorate of Quality Assurance at the State level as it is being presently practised in Lagos, Ekiti and some other south west States will go a long way to reduce the incidence of reluctant teacher in Nigerian schools, thereby working towards addressing the noted contextual challenge. Therefore, any attempt to initiate a welfare package aimed at improving teachers' conditions of service will be targeting the right group, that is, the "teachers to remember".

V. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY OF TEACHERS

Improving teachers' welfare for increased performance and productivity can be commonly assumed to be a good thing that goes on to influence their behaviour and performance at work. It naturally has to do with teachers' attitude to work and their desire to participate in the pedagogical processes within the school environment.

Classroom climate is therefore important in teacher motivation. Ofoegbu (2004) remarked that if a teacher experiences the classroom as a safe, healthy, happy place with supportive resources and facilities for teaching for optimal learning, he/she tends to participate more than expected in the process of management, administration, and the overall improvement of the school.

Teacher motivation, therefore, is anything done to make teachers happy, satisfied, dedicated and committed in such a way that they bring out their best in their places of work so that both students, parents and the society will greatly benefit from their services.

Thus, it is expected that authorities charged with the responsibility of teacher preparation and recruitment would need to review the "modus operandi" guiding their activities. Specifically, there is need to explore a systematic link of the In-service teacher education programmes closely to the learning needs and workplace challenges of the teachers. This will encourage an improved welfare of teachers through the review and upgrading of the systematic professional development for teachers. Status will improve; teachers will become more confident in the midst of other professionals (the teacher professional development component of the Lagos

State EKO Project is very good testimony that could be shared and emulated) and will be spurred to want to be more productive.

This is supported by Ofogbe and Ezugoh (2010) who recommended that teachers should be given both local and international scholarships to upgrade and update their knowledge and skills in order to influence changes in education. They should be encouraged to further the spirit of enquiry and creativity and assisted to fit into the social life of the community and society at large. By way of motivation, their commitment to the teaching profession will become better enhanced.

Furthermore, effective resolution of the contextual challenge under focus would also demand an objective and deliberate categorisation of teachers for improved welfare sake, using rational assessment instruments. This will not only promote improved efficiency in the teaching profession but encourage that reluctant teacher to aspire to be better teachers who will work as teachers to remember by their students.

The reluctant teacher needs to be helped so that h/she can effectively contribute to teaching, learning and the social development of the learners. They need to be made to develop the consciousness for self-reflection, which demands readiness to accept mistakes and creation of opportunities for open conversation with their learners and colleagues in order to improve.

In addition, some specific strategies will be needed to move such teacher from his/her reluctant state to a very active and productive state. Some of the strategies recommended by Patrascu (1995) for realizing essential shift in quality as quoted by Lawal (2014) include:

- ✓ Ginger the teacher's interest by drawing his/her attention to the advantages of the shifting as a result of change, e.g. a sense of greater professionalism (i.e. self-esteem), increased recognition, job satisfaction, etc.
- ✓ Spend time on building trust, understanding and support.
- ✓ Draw on existing knowledge, skills and experience;
- ✓ Explain change in terms which teachers will see as relevant and acceptable;
- ✓ Play on self-esteem and professional recognition as incentives/rewards for change;
- ✓ Ask for suggestions and feedback and incorporate them at the teacher training level;
- ✓ Use the experiential mode of training and make it relevant to the teacher's work;
- ✓ Encourage experimentation by teachers and have them reflect on it, e.g. through peer review and micro-teaching;
- ✓ Increase confidence by providing positive feedback to those involved in success;
- ✓ Be open and clear about conflicts of new methodology with present practices; and encourage discussion of these conflicts.

Right choices in these areas can prevent teachers from developing feelings of incompetency, inadequacy, and confusion, which are all capable of increasing their resistance to and even lead to their rejection of change.

Evolving a policy of recruiting the best brains into the teaching profession is another measure that can be used to address the contextual challenge. The Singapore teacher recruitment policy which emphasises that "the recruitment of

new student teachers is limited to the top one-third of each graduating cohort (MOE, Singapore, 2010) could be explored for practice in Nigeria. By this arrangement, that reluctant teacher phenomenon would find it difficult to stray into the teaching profession.

A sincere implementation of the provisions of the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) (FME, 2014) will also go a long way in the quality of entrants into the teaching profession. For example, Principle One of the policy highlights some incentives that should be introduced in order to attract first rated candidates into the teaching profession. Specifically, incentives for the enrolment of teachers are expected to include, scholarship schemes, bonuses, full adoption and implementation of the Teachers Salary Scale (TSS), extension of the B.Sc. Ed; B.A.Ed. B.Ed. programmes from the present 4-year period to a 5-year period and setting the duration of the teaching practice in the Bachelor's degree programme to a total of two academic terms; one at the 300 level and the other at the 400 level.

Improved welfare package for practitioners in the teaching profession essentially demands better financing of teacher development programmes from a variety of sources if that reluctant teacher is to be converted to that teacher to remember. The NTEP identified some of the sources that could be explored to include, a 2% of National annual allocation/budget for the next ten years be set aside as Teacher Education Development Fund Account (TEDFA); and increase support from Universal basic Education Commission (UBEC) for capacity development of teachers as provided for in the UBEC Act (FME, 2014).

A conscious and deliberate effort by government at the three levels (Federal, State and Local) to explore the feasibility of the foregoing suggested strategies can not but help in addressing the contextual challenge which this presenter identified in this paper.

VI. CONCLUSION

The teacher is one profession that creates all other professions, and as re-emphasised by Prof. Segun Ajiboye, the Registrar of TRCN (2016), no nation can rise beyond the quality of its teachers, improving their welfare therefore becomes a task that must be shouldered by all the major stakeholders. This paper has however noted that there is a contextual challenge that may constrain any effort at improving the welfare of our in-service teachers. That challenge is the complexity and implications of providing improved welfare package for two groups of teachers; the reluctant teacher and the teacher to remember.

The conclusion that could be drawn here is that the two groups should not be jointly considered for improved package. Rather, exploring some of the strategies earlier recommended in this paper would advance the frontiers of actions capable of turning that reluctant teacher into a teacher to remember, while the latter will not equally rest on his/her oars. Thus, any improved welfare package targeting the teaching profession will not be unnecessarily misdirected.

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