

12-1-2022

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Ugochukwu Mercy Prince-Ifoh

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### Recommended Citation

Prince-Ifoh, Ugochukwu Mercy (2022) "Teachers Productivity in Nigerian Primary Schools: A Critical Analysis in The 21st Century," *Young African Leaders Journal of Development*. Vol. 4, Article 12. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/yaljod/vol4/iss1/12>

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## TEACHERS PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

*Ugochukwu Mercy Prince-Ifoh*

*Author, Teacher and Education Researcher, Lagos – Nigeria.*

### ABSTRACT

*Teacher productivity is a nagging issue in education. The teacher – as the most important factor in the business of teaching and learning – shapes the direction and influences, to a great extent, other educational inputs to achieve the stated goals of the education industry. All over the globe today, we have continued to see National Development being intricately tied to educational development – and the teacher is the critical element. Many countries of the world have realised this critical role of teachers in the educational process, and have started investing hugely on the teacher and fine-tuning his/her skills and potentials in order to meet up the country's development needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Countries like Luxembourg, Finland and Singapore are lining up powerful opportunities and creating incentives in a verge to enhance teachers' productivity and foster quality education in classrooms. The education situation in Nigeria has not shown a clear or linear upward progression. Evidence abounds as to the establishment of functional teachers training institutions, improved salaries and incentives, reformed agenda, padded education policies and maybe, curriculum revisions. The evidence of the positive impact of all these efforts do not seem to be significant. The problem of Nigerian education and the recent discovery of acclaimed graduates who cannot spell or recite the alphabets is traceable to poor primary foundation. Successful efforts from the foundation will reflect on all stages of the educational system. This research, therefore, reviews past and present efforts of the government and other stakeholders aimed at improving the productivity of teachers in Nigerian primary schools. It also discusses some solutions to Nigeria's educational malaise – whilst also highlighting recommendations about how Nigeria could boost the productivities of teachers in her primary schools.*

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world with 13.2 million children who are either not enrolled in school, or dropped out of school. According to a UNICEF report, one out of every 5 of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> If we go by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education – we will reach a consensus that all children, no matter where they live or what their circumstance have the right to, and should access quality education. Whilst Nigeria now has 13.2 million out-of-school children, over 26 million other children are reportedly enrolled in the country's public and private primary schools. There are no guarantee that those within the four walls of the classroom receive quality education. From unmotivated teachers to dilapidated classrooms, the Nigerian educational system is still riddled with issues and problems. The education certain schools provide in Nigeria is irregular and substandard – and the care for children is often unsatisfactory. One of the biggest causes of this is the lack of qualified teachers. Many schools severely underpay their staff – and this negatively affect the employment rates. Those teachers that agree to the low pay are often unqualified for the task at hand. There is a need to improve on the quality of teachers for pupils to have a positive primary school experience that will make learning interesting and interactive for pupils to succeed academically. A conducive learning environment which provides equitable education for boys and girls is also key to the sustainability of humanity.



Good teaching is at the heart of good schooling. So the quality of teacher preparation and motivation is essential to helping pupils reach high academic standard. Yet many enter the teaching profession unprepared – having received poor quality training. Some teachers work without the regular teaching license offered by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) – and had never received any form of training. To provide quality education for all students, teacher quality practices – and their other necessary motivations – should be of high standard as teachers are the key to quality education. It is therefore necessary to examine the factors affecting teachers' productivity in Nigeria's public and private primary schools. The findings of this study can help improve the quality of education in primary schools.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The education system is plagued by a myriad of problem – low productivity on the part of the teachers, poor performance of students, unavailability of learning materials, ill-behaved students and decline in the quality of education to mention but a few. There is a school of thought that believes that all the above-mentioned problems are associated with the poor performance and unproductivity of teachers. This school believes that when teachers are adequately trained, properly paid and regularly motivated, their productivity will be enhanced, students' academic performance by extension will also be enhanced and the quality of educational outcomes will equally be enhanced. This study therefore examines the various ways of boosting teachers' productivity in Nigerian primary schools with a greater concentration on what is obtainable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The major purpose of this study is to investigate the causes of teachers' unproductivity in Nigerian public and private primary schools – and to examine the different – yet intertwined – ways of enhancing the quality of teaching among primary school teachers.

### **NIGERIA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Primary school education has been bewildered with barrages of problem since independence. In 1955, the Universal Primary School Education was introduced into the Western region by Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Since then, the system has undergone series of changes. The programme was later introduced across the entire country by General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976, and was launched as Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999. All along, the process has been faced with different challenges ranging from input, process and output per the quality of teachers.

### **TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

The history of teacher education in Nigeria is as old as Western education in the country – traceable to the activities of the various Church missions who established training institutions for the training of elementary teachers. But the teacher training programmes of the Church mission were considered to be unsatisfactory. What they provided were trainings which equip their products for relatively routine tasks instead of professional role as distinct practitioners. This led to the setting up of Phelps-Stroke Commission in 1925 – and the Ashby Commission report in 1959 (Fafunwa 1974).

According to Ejima (2012), the Phelps-Stroke report gave rise to two forms of teacher education of two years duration each. These were Elementary Training Colleges for training Grade III teachers for the junior primary school and the Higher Elementary Training Colleges for training Grade II teachers for the senior primary school. These colleges did not prepare the products for professional role as teachers. Hence, the Ashby Commission report led to the establishment of more universities and the introduction of Bachelor's degree in education either as B.A. (Ed), B. Sc. (Ed) or B. ED. The modification of this Commission report



occasioned the establishment of Advanced Teachers Colleges which in later years metamorphosed to what is now known as Colleges of Education. These colleges were designated for the production of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) holders – a kind of middle level manpower (teachers) for the junior secondary school; the first few years after primary education.

Fafunwa (2004) reported that the University of Ibadan floated a one-year Diploma in Education programme for non-education graduates involved in teaching and Associate Certificate in Education for Grade II teachers as part of the effort in teacher professional development in Nigeria.

The FRN (2004) noted that the education programme in Nigeria is offered in Colleges of Education, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), and Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities, National Mathematical Centre and the Nigerian Language Centre. All these programmes and establishments were geared towards empowering the teachers and sharpening their skills toward ensuring better learning outcomes in classrooms.

When a teacher is well equipped and empowered to improve the lives of children in primary schools, everyone would expect that perfect work would be done in classrooms. But nothing happens because there are other factors that can also hinder teachers' effectiveness and short-circuit their productivity. I have been opportune to study the educational systems of some other countries around the world, and I have realised that one of the major factors impeding the quality of education in Nigeria is traceable to teachers' welfare. In today's Nigeria, no parent would be so happy to hear that his or her daughter is in love and wants to get married to a teacher. The first mention of teacher propels a quiet, shock mood – but, of course, there are teachers in high-brow schools in those well-served communities who earn decent salaries. However, how many of those well-paid primary school teachers can we see in our neighbourhood?

Poor Teachers' Welfare is a major issue and a lived reality in many developing African nations. Nigeria lays little or no emphasis on the welfare or wellbeing of teachers. People of the teaching profession – especially preschool and primary school teachers – are widely regarded as paupers or scapegoats of the society.

Poor Teacher's Welfare is a major problem affecting the quality of education in Nigeria. It is one of the consequences of both poor funding and corruption in the government. One of the major reasons why many teachers lead low-budget lives is because of their poor salary scale and bonuses. Teachers are not paid well in the country. If you want to see someone earning as little as N10, 000 monthly, you have to go check inside one of those schools in underserved communities. Even the pontificated government schools don't pay their teachers deserving salaries. The government also isn't helping matters either – as they are not always regular with the payments of salaries. The irregular payment of salaries is another problem that teachers face in Nigeria. It is sad that, sometimes, teachers have to take industrial actions before they get their salaries.

There is no gainsaying that poor teachers' welfare lead to the lack of dedication of teachers. Teaching is not seen as a lucrative job – so not many people want to become teachers or stay in the profession. The ones that love teaching and have decided to stay are, in most cases, not dedicated or qualified. Some even hate their jobs. Why? Because income from the teaching profession doesn't meet their needs or the needs of their families. You can be working and love your job – but there is going to be a problem if your job doesn't help you cater for your family. This is what most teachers face. Most of the teachers in Nigeria have other businesses to support them and their families – and this undoubtedly steals part of their time,



concentration and effort. They spend time and put more efforts on their businesses – rather than on the learners and classroom. Some even do their business in school – if you visit one of the government schools in Lagos or Ogun, a research claims you will undoubtedly find two (2) in every three (3) teachers selling one thing or the other.

Teachers are not giving time to their work – and they are not learning progressively – so there is the lack of high performers in the educational system. Many teachers do not know more than one way to solve a mathematical equation because they are not learning. The government organises very few teachers training to benefit these teachers... From whatever angle we look at it, we will see that many of the problems of the educational sector is traceable to the training and welfare of teachers. Teachers are the main determinants of quality in education. If they are not trained, committed or motivated, the whole educational system will suffer setback. This is why we need to upgrade and enhance the quality of training offered in Colleges of Education to meet up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands.

For Olorunsola E.O. (2014), quality education is often linked with such indicators as quality teachers, improved curriculum, good delivery, quality infrastructure, facilities, conducive learning environment, provision of adequate learning materials, training and retraining of teachers, improved teacher-pupil ratio, parental involvement, increased and improved monitoring and superior of learning and quality output amongst others. She argued that the negative behavioural tendencies as well as the poor qualification of teachers, their role as nation builders and drivers of development remain suspect as weak teacher will ultimately produce weak students.

Primary school education is at the base of educational system, it constitutes the foundation or bedrock of the nation's new technological and scientific education. The need for enhancing in-service training needs of primary school teachers cannot therefore be under-estimated. A teacher who is not constantly expanding or deepening his knowledge – or being motivated – cannot do an adequate job.

A quality teacher – according to Richard (2002) – is said to be an effective teacher. Studies, such as Richard (2002) and Ferguson (1991), which focused on investigating total teacher effectiveness revealed that in a single school year, students who were assigned to an effective teacher could gain a full grade level more than those students who were assigned to an ineffective teacher. Therefore, their studies' observation defined quality teachers in a way that is of most interest to student achievement gain which is the main aim of education. This is also affirmed in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2006) that no educational system can rise above the quality of the teachers in the system. In other words, the quality of teachers in an educational system determines the quality of the system because teachers are policy implementers.

Education in Nigeria is faced with poor levels of teaching and learning and prevalent moral decadence in the society. These conditions lead to high level of examination malpractices, high rate of school dropout and other vices as indicated in a 2006 report by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). Ogunsaju (2004) stated that the academic standard in all Nigeria educational institution fell considerably below societal expectations. Blumende (2001) corroborated this view when he reported that the decline in the quality of education in Nigeria cannot be ignored by anyone who is aware of the significant role of education as an instrument of societal transformation and development.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised by knowledge – and different trends have been introduced to make education more effective. Besides capacity-development trainings and other motivations, there is the role



of technology in promoting education and preparing a well-furnished set of graduates for the modern world. But there are many challenges of technology education for teachers in Nigeria. The impact of globalization and inculcation of information and communication technology into teaching and learning have ushered in some attendance challenges. In the world today, emphasis is tailored towards science and technology and governed by ever-increasing discoveries, inventions and innovations; hence there is a great need for teachers and learners to be ICT complaint. But in the words of Aladejana & Jegede (2000), most Nigerian educators are averagely ICT competent, but majority of these teachers have never and do not know how to use ICT in delivering the curriculum – and this in turn poses a great challenge to the teaching and learning process. For Ajevalemi (2015), an effective teacher of any subject matter must demonstrate mastery of the subject matter.

### **FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS' PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The National Curriculum Association conference held in 1969 described the teacher as the “keyman in the entire educational programme.” This would mean that without teachers, it is possible for the educational sector to come short of its goals every time. This is why Edem (1987) pointed that “the curriculum however well developed and however properly interpreted, will come for short of our hopes unless it is applied by teachers who are themselves the product of its philosophy.

Many factors hinder the effectiveness and productivity of teachers in Nigerian primary schools. For the purpose of this research, we will consider some of the pressing factors as well as their proffered solutions. In Nigerian primary schools most times, teachers are left to their fate to face the rigours of academic and in some cases administration work, and this contributes to decline both in efficiency and effectiveness. Worst still, inspite of these rigours, teachers are being poorly motivated in terms of salary remunerations. Borton (1981) stated that “education is not just for personal survival or to increase one's income or power over others, but it is enriching one's life for personal growth beyond survival and income.” Whilst agreeing with this view, the question is will it also be justifiable for these teachers to use their meagre income for the provision of school facilities, learning materials and equipment needed for effective school work to progress? If the answer to this question is positive, then according to Byme (1981), “there is a danger that the teacher will lose his initial keenness in teaching for something better.”

For teachers to remain experts, there must be a continuous in-service training programme for him and the urge to expand his breadth of understanding. In a situation where there is little or no in-service training programmes and other opportunities for the teacher to widen their knowledge, it is obvious that they will become incompetent.

This is further buttressed by Wilbert (1978) when he said that “the teacher's ability to remain well informed on new developments and his ability to make creative and critical judgements concerning the main trends in his field bear directly upon his competence as an expert.” In other words, if teachers are behind time and obsolete in their disciplines, their effectiveness becomes questionable.

High teacher-student ratio, inadequate facilities, equipment and materials could affect teachers' effectiveness – and could also reduce the performance level of an average learner. In a situation of unconducive school climate, teachers may find it difficult to function effectively. The school climate entails the sum total of the values and attitudes held by those in the school. These include the interpersonal relationships existing between the principal and teachers, between the teacher-students and other people within the environment as well as everything the school reflects.



According to Ajetunmobi (2001), “there is a direct relationship between the environment and the intellectual development of the child inspite of the hereditary germ plasma.” Hence, in a situation where there is a great school environment physically and materially, a child will perform well.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some of the ways to enhance teachers' productivity in Nigerian primary schools include the following:

### **Upgrade Salary Scale**

In countries like Singapore, Finland, Luxemburg and Switzerland, teachers earn pretty well – very good salaries. Teaching in these countries is lucrative, and the teachers are very dedicated to their jobs thereby progressively adding to the quality of their education. The Nigerian government ought to rethink the place of education and teachers in our collective pursuit of national development. No country truly desirous of development will downgrade education or neglect the welfare of teachers; hence it is important for Nigeria to give the rightful place to education and to teachers.

Salaries of teachers need to be increased in Nigeria. The teaching profession need to become one of the most lucrative professions in the countries – so that highly qualified and trained individuals would gladly join the educational sector and improve the learner's experience. When the educational sector pays well, highly-skilled and highly-trained individuals would become teachers - and members of the teaching system would exude unmatched dedication to their jobs. When teachers are happy and dedicated, learners will benefit from this awesome atmosphere – and the quality of education in the country would improve progressively.

### **Budget More For Education**

Every year, we read in the news that a paltry sum from the national budget has been reserved for education. Where would the funds for capital expenditure, teacher's trainings and other necessary bonuses come from? It is necessary for the government to understand the need to accord a more reasonable percentage to the educational sector so as to boost the quality of teaching in the classroom. Teachers need to be trained regularly. A country like Nigeria ought to strategically use education to achieve its national development. The best way out of poverty is through investment in education – especially investment on those who deliver it.

### **Prompt Payment Of Salaries**

If the government cannot increase the salaries of teachers at this time for whatever reasons they give, at least, paying teachers on time should become an imperative in Nigeria. Prompt payment of teacher's salaries and bonuses is very necessary if the remaining committed teachers are to remain committed. If salaries are paid timely, many of these teachers would put in more efforts in the teaching jobs that they do. Their families would be moderately catered-for whilst they invest more of their time and energy towards executing their tasks.

### **Professional Development**

Teachers are supposed to progress in their careers like a banker or any other professional progresses in his or her career pursuit. Our teachers should be made to enjoy the benefits of capacity-development and other professional trainings which will help them progress in their career and earn timely promotions. Teacher professional development is a key component in creating effective learning environment for children. Just like their students, teachers can function at their highest potential when they follow a



professional development plan.

Professional development gives teachers the opportunity to self-reflect and develop traits allowing them to lead successful classrooms. When implemented properly, teacher professional development – which hold in forms of training and retraining – offers a wealth of knowledge and advice to teachers and administrators on the benefits of personal reflection and how to use it to spur insight and growth in the classroom. Education is a never-ending process; hence career-minded individuals ought to constantly improve their skills and become more proficient at their jobs.

### **Regular And Due Promotions**

Promotion comes with more responsibilities – and increment of salaries. It calls for more commitment. In the midst of the poor salary scale, when a teacher is promoted, he or she gets an increment in their salaries and greater responsibilities are committed to him or her. The teacher will work harder, become more dedicated and eventually provide moderately for his or her family needs.

Our educational sector needs to be improved – so that learners can enjoy quality experience. And the perfect way to do this – amongst others – would be to improve the welfare of the teacher. There's no gainsaying that Nigeria needs to invest hugely into education so as to enjoy the benefits of social, political and economic developments.

### **EVALUATION & CONCLUSION**

Professionalism in teaching is an important tool in teacher productivity. It is probably in recognition of this importance that the federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (1981) stated that:

*“Teaching, like other professions, will be largely and publicly recognized as a profession. Nigeria is already a signatory to the recommendations on the status of teachers. Government will set up a teachers' Council among whose functions will be accreditation, certification, registration, discipline and regulations governing the profession of teaching. Those teachers already admitted into the profession without the requisite qualifications will be given a period of time within which to qualify for admission or leave the profession (p. 41 Section 9:79).”*

It is noteworthy that many teachers at the primary school level are now holders of the Nigerian Certificate Education (NCE). This is in conformity with the policy which makes the NCE the minimum qualification for teaching in primary schools. Teachers at higher levels also upgrade themselves through seminars and further studies. Also of importance is the fact that the curriculum of teacher education (as stipulated by the National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Universities Commission) is comprehensive enough with emphasis on both theory and practice. A critical look at teaching shows that it does not have all the indices of professionalism, and so does not share similar status and reward with classical professions like law, medicine and accountancy. Teaching, which could best be described as a 'quasi-profession', has conditions of service for teachers at all levels of education manifest \*fv little or no correlation between efforts put in and rewards given. Furthermore, teaching attracts greater control (interference) by government, undoubtedly because education is mainly financed by government. In addition, teachers constitute the single largest occupational group. Hence, government feels 'over-burdened' to cope with teachers' financial demands, resulting in these demands being treated with reluctance. Moreover, there is lack of effective organization to regulate the activities and performance of the members and effectively protect and provide for members' welfare. There is a general dearth of adequate facilities to work with in





almost all spheres of Nigeria economy Teaching is however the worst affected. All resources - human, material and financial - are in acute short supply in schools. This apparent lack of necessary tools to work with, in addition to the poor reward system of teachers results in reduced motivation and commitment to carrying out curricular and co-curricular activities both during and after school hours.

The major problem militating against professionalism in teaching for improved educational productivity is management. This manifests in form of inadequate provision of human, material and financial resources, and lack of social recognition and status for teachers. In the area of teacher education, periodic review of training programmes is thus essential to ensure relevant effectiveness in attaining the set goals of education. Government must improve salaries and allowances, social security, and other fringe benefits commensurate with the efforts of teachers. There is thus the need to design a system of reward (both monetary and non-monetary) that attempts to equate hardwork and reward. In this way, competent people can be attracted and retained in teaching. Furthermore, adequate facilities necessary for concrete learning, such as well-stocked libraries, well equipped laboratories and other teaching equipment and materials should be provided.

The National Policy on Education (2004) states "Education in Nigeria is an instrument 'par excellence' for affective national development... It is therefore, desirable for the nation to spell out clear and unequivocal terms the philosophy and objectives that underlie its investment in education. Ojoawo (1995) posited that education is recognized both as an end in itself and as a mean to achieve many other ends. It is the only sector in the economy that has the primary responsibilities of human resources development from cradle to adulthood for the purpose of national development. Akangbou (1991) wrote that "Education is a service provided in all countries of the world with many objectives in mind. These objectives include the development of the skills required for a more rapid growth of the economy and provision of basic knowledge to the citizens of the country concerned". Emphasizing the importance of education in the social and economic development of a country, the success, survival and continuity of any organization in a competitive world is ultimately determined by the productivity of its employees (workers) as well as the satisfaction which these workers derive from performing their jobs (Olaniyan, 1990). The teacher is regarded as the man or woman who has undergone some professional/academic training to prepare him or her for the task of facilitating the education of children and young learners in the school. The school on its own part is the structured environment organized to provide or encourage interaction between the teacher and the learner in the complex process of learning. Teaching is seen as a matter of great importance and generally a suitable tool to hand down the people or nation legacies from one generation to another. "Teaching should be regarded as a profession. It is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study. It also calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils in their charge" (Teachers Code of Conduct, 2009, 3 Rec.6). Indeed, the state of education in Nigeria is below expectation (non-productive) and the level of our teachers' commitment is a reflection of their welfare packages that is not benefiting. President Umaru Yar' Adua believes much more in vision 2020 and that is why he choose education as one of his 7 point agenda, in order to meet up with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) in 2015 and to make Nigeria one of the top 20 economies countries in the world by the year 2020. The National Policy on Education (2004; 33) Says "Since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development "The goals of teacher education among others is to: (a) produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system; (b) to enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession. The quality of



teachers is as vital as the quality of the students. Experience has shown that owing to social, political, economic and even educational delicacy situation, it has gradually become so difficult to find teachers who know and are motivated to teach their subject in a better way. However, Stodgily (1974) said that "there would be high level of productivity if on their part the administrators could recognize the teachers' needs and provide opportunity for smooth teaching and learning process". There is need for teachers' good welfare conditions which would bring about total commitment for the purpose of productivity in the education sector. To ensure effective job performance in any organization, workers must be involved in articulating their own needs and in participating in the making of vital output through their commitment (Olaniyan, 1990).

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