STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING TEACHER COMPETENCE AND QUALITY OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

In most countries of the world, education has been seen as an instrument for change, growth and development. The importance of education cannot be overemphasized and education cannot take place without the involvement of a teacher. The paper therefore looked at the concepts of teaching, competence and quality and x-rayed some strategies for improving teacher competence and quality of classroom instruction. Such strategies include reduction of class size, ensuring quality control and monitoring, assessment and evaluation exercise to be included, adequate provision of instructional aids, encouraging teachers to embark on improvisation and enhancement of teachers’ welfare packages. Suggestions were equally made.

Introduction:

In Nigeria and across other countries of the world, education has been seen as an instrument for change, growth and development. It is often seen as a means of passing on of wisdom, experiences, achievement and other activities from the past generation to the young ones (Ekwueme and Igwe 2001). This transmission of wisdom, experience, knowledge and other relevant activities is to make sure there is continuity in acquisition of knowledge that will help promote growth and transformation in every aspect of human activities. One important aspect in education that is very much concerned with the transmission of knowledge is teaching.

What then is teaching?

The Concept of Teaching, Competence and Quality

According to Orji (2007) teaching consists of series of activities that one engages in a bid to bring about desirable change in the behaviour of the learner. It is a complex process that involves several activities. It has been discovered that one may actually be engaged in the teaching process which include the transmission of knowledge for the learners to learn, but may not necessarily be performing a teaching act. Some of these teaching acts have been identified as follows: - marking register, maintaining discipline, keeping records and a lot others. From the foregoing therefore, teaching can be regarded as a cluster of activities that facilitate or promote the effective transmission of knowledge from the experts who happen to
be the teachers to the learners (Orji, 2007). In essence, the teacher is one who transmits knowledge to learners either within the classroom or outside the class.

The role which the teacher plays in the teaching learning process is very crucial that for sometime now, it has continued to attract attention and interest in many academic fora and even in the society at large. The goals of teacher education as stipulated in the Nigeria National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) are as follows.

- To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all level of our educational system;
- Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- Provide teacher with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations, and
- Enhance teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession.

Teacher education according to Omorogie (2006) is the component of any educational system charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire competences and skills of teaching for the improvement in the quality of teachers for the school system. Teacher education is structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties.

The delivery of quality instruction in the classroom in any education system depends largely on the quality and competence of the teachers. This is so because the teachers are expected to perform the important functions of guiding, directing, evaluating, imparting, asking and answering questions among others for maximum benefits of the learners. The implication is that the teacher is the stronghold on which the business of education rests upon the world over. To Oriaifo (1999), without the teacher the entire superstructure of education will be shaky and weak.

On its own part, competence refers to effectiveness or ability of anyone concerned to apply the acquired knowledge and skill to achieve desired results. The issue of teacher competence or what we can refer to as teacher effectiveness and quality of instruction has been of great concern to all stakeholders in the education industry. Equally of concern is the growing desire to ensure that our educational institutions deliver what they are mapped out for and to ensure that what is delivered produces the desired outcomes. According to Urevbu (2006) teacher competencies are the knowledge, skills and values which a teacher possesses. He further stated that they are tools of teaching. To him only teachers who possess all the skills, knowledge and values needed to function effectively in a classroom situation are competent to teach in that situation. This implies that competence is relative because since there different learning or teaching conditions, the level of competence needed for effective teaching will equally be based on conditions. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of proactive and interactive teaching activities will depend on the level of competence exhibited by the teacher.
On the concept of quality, Okobia (2005) associated the concept with the issue of relevance, validity, functionalism and efficacy of a system in the attaining the set goals and priorities. This is to say that quality can mean desired or derived levels of attainment expressed in terms of products of teaching/instruction. On her own part, Maduewusi (2005) examined quality in relation to teaching as a multifaceted issue which takes into cognizance all that take place within the teaching-learning process and how they are managed so as to produce the desired outcome. In the same vein (Akinpelu 2001) highlighted three important application of quality in relation to education.

They include:
- Quality as relevance
- Quality as efficiency
- Quality as essence

In effect, quality cannot be divulged from competence, efficiency and effectiveness. Maintaining quality or attainment of quality particularly in education is not an easy task. It is complex and is determined by a number of variable which may include the following: the type of teachers, teaching, learner-teacher ratio, fund, learners population among others (Omoruyi et al 2007). To attain quality in teaching, the instructional process needs to be properly organized and managed; content of teaching, must be very relevant, and attainment of high level of learning which leads to the desired results. The implication is that the variables/elements in the teaching-learning activities must be carefully and diligently integrated to ensure the attainment of quality in classroom instruction. In other words, teachers need to explore strategies in order to enhance or improve teaching competence and quality in schools.

Researchers (Anaduaka, 2010) have shown that the level of teachers’ competence, and quality in Nigeria school have been rated very low in recent times. Besides there has been serious concern from the general public that learning outcomes have continued to dwindle as a result of low teaching competence of the teachers (Orji 2010). Other reasons could range from poor attitude to teaching, unplanned and uncoordinated teaching and learning, lack of commitment to teaching and learning, poor training, private sector participation, over population of some schools indiscipline, impatience and intolerance among others (Akinpelu, 2010). The question now is, what are these strategies and how can they effectively be applied to ensure quality instruction in the classroom? As one of the concerned groups, it is deemed not only fit but timely to discuss on the strategies for enhancing teacher competence and quality of classroom instruction.

**Strategies for Improving Teacher competence and quality of Classroom Instruction**
In the teaching – learning process, teacher’s competence and quality of instruction given are key necessary inputs in education process. To attain the desired quality and standard in the education sector, teacher competence and the quality of instruction he dishes out need to be of high standard. It is what the teacher has, that he can offer. To enhance competence and quality of classroom instruction by the teacher, several strategies need to be put in place.
They include:

- **Ensuring quality control and monitoring.** The current trend in education is the issue of quality control and good management. In this vein, close monitoring of the teacher performance in line with the programme objectives and performance in the classroom should be highly emphasized so as to enhance competence and quality of instruction.

- **Assessment and Evaluation measures need to be included in the teaching profession,** where continuous feedback from the classroom will enable practitioners and programme executors know what is happening in the field. Students’ evaluation or assessment of their teachers could be used to perform this task. Studies (Orji, 2004) have shown that students’ evaluation of their lecturers’ teaching effectiveness have helped to checkmate their teachers’ performance and quality of instruction.

- **Also, the present effort which aimed at the privatization, commercialization of the education sector in line with the current spirit of freedom given in the enterprise should be looked into with all seriousness and with caution too.** This is because there are dangers that are associated with this spirit of free enterprise. It is obvious that the idea behind free enterprise is to enhance economic efficiency and maximize profit. It therefore means that allowing spirit of free enterprise to dominate the education sector in the continent means defeating the purpose and motive behind the establishment of private schools/institutions. Buttressing this view, Akinpelu (2001) observed that to offer better quality education to their clients they normally charge exorbitant fees and thereby restricting patronage to only those who can afford the charges making the whole exercise to look more of business than academic.

On the other hand, some who charge lesser school fees opt for cheap labour thereby employing half-baked teachers into the system. By so doing the competence and quality of instruction given will be questionable. So to enhance competence and quality of instruction the issue of free enterprise cum privatization should be handled with caution.

- **Reduction of class size:** The current trend particularly in the public schools is the issue of overpopulation which needs to be addressed. This has made teacher competence and quality of instruction to be low. A teacher saddled with the responsibility of teaching a class of one hundred and fifty students with little or no relevant instructional materials, his efforts is being sabotaged because there will not be any efficient and effective teaching and invariably, learning is affected so to enhance teachers competence and quality of instruction, the class size should be reduced to a good ratio of say 1:40 on the maximum.

- **Adequate provision of instructional Aids:** There is need to provide the teachers with relevant and current instructional aids/materials for effective teaching and learning. This will enhance competence and subsequent quality in education. There are various facilities like the ICT and materials that need to be provided for the teacher for better teaching and learning outcomes.

- **Enhancing Teachers’ welfare:** The status of the teacher and the teaching profession need to be seriously enhanced by providing the teachers with suitable and good accommodation, in-service training with full pay, job security, good working condition and better pay packages that are comparable to what obtain in most admired professions. This will to a very large extent enhance
performance/competence and the quality of instruction given in the classrooms by the teachers. The issue of low teacher motivation in terms of regular payments of salaries, arrears inadequate funding has continued to attract less capable recruits into teaching.

Suggestions

To enhance teachers’ competence and quality of classroom instruction the following are suggested:

1. **Quality control and monitoring:** There should be close monitoring of what happens in the classroom between the teachers and the students. When this is done by the right people the issue of quality will be controlled.
   It will also help to ensure that the system does not deviate from the set goals. Inspection of schools should be regular, and consistent, coherent and complementary.

2. **Assessment and Evaluation Measures:** This will help to bring continuous feedback from the classroom and enable practitioners and programme executors know what is happening in the field and equally checkmate teacher’s performance and quality of instruction.

3. **In-service training for teachers:** Teachers who are already in the field should be made to undergo in-service training programmes to update their knowledge. The unqualified teachers particularly in the private sector of the education system should compulsorily undergo the training if we are talking of enhancing quality and competence of teachers in the classroom.

4. Class size should be reduced to the ratio of 1:40 as stipulated by policy on education. Where this is not possible, what next?

5. Teachers’ welfare needs should be enhanced. This will help to boost the status of teachers and the teaching profession. Their salaries and allowance should be paid regularly and funds need to be made available to attract capable hands into the profession.

6. Relevant instructional materials should be provided for effective teaching and learning. Educational facilities are imperative to quality teaching in our schools. Facilities like textbooks libraries, seats and tables, teaching aids are all very important for the effective implementation and attainment of the educational goals.

7. Encouraging teachers to embark on improvisation.

Conclusion:

Nigeria, like the rest countries of the world, has the strong desire for development. Today, and more than ever before, it has become an indisputable fact that any nation that wants the development of its human resources needs a key. And the key to this development is education. To enhance teacher competence and quality of classroom instruction by the teacher necessary strategies must be put in place to promote excellence in education.
References


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