

Problems Faced by Public School Teachers in Nigeria and the Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

The sustainability of educational system is in the hands of teachers in any society worldwide. Teachers are the engine rooms of the educational system. The advancement of any nation depends on the quality and welfare of the teachers. In Nigeria, teachers are faced with legions of problem. This article intends to discuss the various problems facing the teachers in public schools in Nigeria. Secondary data were explored comprehensively to support the various points raised in the article. The data were obtained from the internet and print sources from e-libraries and conventional libraries. The article submitted that, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of motivation, poor capacity development programmes, insecurity, lack of ICT knowledge and skills as well as unconducive working environment constitute the legions of problem facing the teachers in public schools across the 36 states of Nigeria. The article preferred useful solutions as lean way to address the problems.

KEYWORDS: *Teachers, Problems, Schools, Public, Programme*

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria's educational system consists of three levels namely, Basic Education, Secondary and tertiary. Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. National policy on Education (2014), opines that Basic Education is to be provided by Government, it shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises: 1-year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education and 3 years of Senior Secondary Education. At the tertiary level, the system consists of a University sector and a non-University sector. Non-University sector is composed of polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education. The tertiary sector as a whole offers opportunities for undergraduate, post graduate, vocational and technical education.

In each of the educational system, professional teachers are employed to teach and carry out other educational services. Teachers are the implementers of school curriculum. Every educational institutions needs teachers. Teachers are regarded as the engine room of educational institutions. Teachers working in public educational institutions in Nigeria are facing many challenges. Okebukola in Ngada (2008), while remarking on teachers' quality, observed that over 80% of

respondents in a survey research were of the view that teachers are carriers of weaknesses.

1.1 Objectives of the Research

1. The objective of this research is to find out the problems facing public schools teachers in Nigerian educational institutions.
2. To proffer solutions to the problems facing the public school teachers in Nigeria.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on system theory because the school is an organization that function like the system. The systems theory was developed between 1950 and 1960 due to the need for a more effective and humanitarian management approach. The systems approach emanated from the general systems theory which consists of the input process- output model. Lessing (1982) describes the system as a network of interdependent sub-systems (divisions) which constantly interact with one another to achieve a joint goal. The operation of any of the subsystems usually affects the whole system. The school system consists of a number of interdependent divisions such as administration division, supervision division, quality assurance division, students' division, teachers' division, infrastructural facilities division, security division and examination. These divisions must work together and needs each other to achieve the goals of the organization. These divisions are known as sub-systems of the school and interact constantly with one another. Each division has a role to play and it must be sound and healthy to play its roles. The system receives human and materials resources as input such as financial resources, instructional resources, teachers, students. The process takes place within the system that involves deployment of both human and materials resources for the administration, management, supervision, implementation of teaching and learning processes. The output is the successful completion of the programme and the emergence of graduates from the system. By using the system approach, administrators are able to plan, organize and coordinate the human and materials resources well in order to facilitate the flow of activities between divisions. Every division is important in the system and must enjoy a healthy relationship within the system in order to realize the objectives of the system. The harmonious cooperation between divisions cannot be over emphasized. If the funds required to implement the school programmes are not adequate, it will affect the entire system because each division's role is crucial for the survival of the system.

2.0 Concept of Teacher

According to the provisions of Teachers' Registration Council Act (2004), teachers are categorized into four main classes namely:

A – Class: Holders of Ph.D. in Education or Ph.D. in other field plus Education (i.e. PGDE)

B – Class: Holders of Master Degree in Education or Master Degree in other field plus Education (i.e. PGDE)

C – Class: Holders of Bachelor degree in Education or Bachelor degree in other field plus Education (i.e. Ogunode & Paul 2021; Akindutire and Ekundayo 431 PGDE).

D – Class: Holders of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or equivalent (Isaac & Haastrup 2012). The provision of the TRC Act emphasized that, 'holders of the TC II and equivalent shall be given provisional registration which shall terminate at the end of 2006.'

This suggests that the minimum NCE requirement as the baseline for teaching in Nigeria had started since 2006 (Ogunode & Paul 2021, Akindutire, & Ekundayo, 2012).

All over the world, teachers are regarded as direct implementers of any educational programme and their roles in nation building cannot be over-emphasized. Before any nation can be transformed into technologically, teachers would be the gratified ones who would in return give back to the nation the

maximum of their intellectual capacity. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory, & Abubakar (2020) noted that teachers are fundamental to effective delivering of teaching programme in the educational institutions. The teachers' place in the educational institutions cannot be replaced. Teachers are the implementers of the curricular. The teacher plans the lesson, organizes the instructional resources and delivers the lesson. The teachers ensure that, students learn the right knowledge and skills through the process of teaching and learning. Ogunode & Paul (2021) observed that the teacher is an important figure in the realization of the objectives of educational institutions. The teacher is responsible for the training and production of manpower for the social, economic and technological advancement while Atiga & Ogunode (2021) opined that teachers are the implementers of school curriculum. Teacher's functions include teaching, preparing lesson notes and lesson plans, evaluating the students, setting examination questions and marking the answer sheets. Their functions also include providing leadership in classes, perform academic services, relating with parents on feedback on students' progress and sometime taking students for excursion with school permission. The teachers are very important factors in the management of educational institutions especially the secondary schools. The teachers' roles cannot be replaced in teaching and learning process. Teachers have been described as the most recognized and indispensable human resources in the educational system. They are equally regarded as the single most important element of the school system; more important than the quality of equipment, materials, or the level of financing. Muheeb (2004) stated that, teachers are the initiators and facilitators of teaching and learning activities and that, they act as agents of changes in any school system and because of these roles they perform, they can be regarded as the heart of quality improvement strategy. It therefore follows that if teachers are to be productive, due attention must be accorded to their job satisfaction and there must be an enabling environment that can boost and improve their productivity.

3.0 Problems Faced by Nigerian Teachers

The following are the identified problems facing public school teachers in Nigeria; over-crowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructural facilities, Poor capacity development programmes, insecurity, poor motivation, poor ICT knowledge and skills and unconducive working environment.

3.1 Over-crowded classrooms

Teachers in public schools in Nigeria from the Basic schools to the higher institutions are faced with the problem of teaching large classes more than the normal class size stipulated by the various educational policies in the country. Ogunode (2021) observed that class size is an educational tool that is used to describe the average number of students per class in a school. The teacher who is the classroom manager should therefore, have the number of students he/she can effectively control, supervise and teach at any given period. But that is not the case in most Nigerian educational institutions. At the Basic schools, the National Policy on education FRN (2013) stipulated a student-teacher ratio of 1:25 for pre-primary classes; 1:35 for primary and 1:40. The reverse is the case in most schools. NEEDS (2014) noted that the primary education subsector has only 541,846 teachers for its student population of 24,278,332 in 61,305 schools. These figures represent a national teacher-to-student ratio of 1:45, which is one of the lowest in Africa. At the public senior secondary schools, similar problem was observed. Alechenu (2012) reports that the National Universities Commission Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) of 2007 stipulated the following teacher/students ratio: 1:20 in science; 1:15 in Engineering and technology; 1:10 in medicine, veterinary medicine and pharmacy, 1:15 in agricultural and environmental sciences and 1:30 in education, management science, social sciences, law and arts but in reality, NEEDS (2014) report showed that the faculty-to-student ratio is very low in many Nigerian Universities. For instance, the National Open University of Nigeria was reported to have a faculty-to-student ratio of 1:363; the University of Abuja, 1:122; and Lagos State University, 1:114. There are many factors responsible

for teachers in public educational institutions teaching large classes. Some of these factors include shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, corruption and poor planning. The effects of teaching large class include low productivity, heavy workload and on the part of the students poor understanding. Adeyela (2000) affirmed that, large class size is not conducive for serious academic work. In the same vein, Afolabi (2002) found no significant relationship among class size and students' learning outcomes. Yara (2010) in his study on class size and academic achievement of students in mathematics in Southwestern Nigeria found out that the performance of students in large classes was very low (23%) compared to those students in smaller classes (64%).

3.2 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is another big problem facing the teachers in the public educational institutions in Nigeria. At the primary schools, Ogunode, (2020a) pointed out that another problem facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria is the challenge of inadequate infrastructural facilities. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. Aliyu (2015) observed that teachers in basic schools do not have offices and many students learn under the trees. At the public secondary schools, Ogunode (2021), submitted that inadequate infrastructural facilities is also another challenge to effective secondary school administration in Nigeria. Many secondary schools in the country do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to deliver effective teaching and learning programme in their schools. Musa (2020) noted that many teachers and administrative staff do not have conducive administrative blocks and offices to carry out their functions. At the public higher institutions, Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar (2021) observed that many academic and non-academic staff in the Nigerian Universities do not have offices to discharge their academic services effectively due to inadequate infrastructural facilities in many Universities in the country. Many academic staff share offices and some do not even have while many non-teaching staff seat under the trees and roam about from one office to the other because they don't have seats. Many academic staff do not have constant light in their offices and internet services to support their online teaching programme. Obemeata (1991) submitted in his study that office spaces for academic staff and lecture rooms or halls are inadequate in our Universities. Fatuzzo (2017) observed that tertiary institutions in Nigeria seem to be grappling with the challenges of engaging their workforce especially the academic staff due to frustrating work conditions arising from inadequate or lack of teaching and research facilities, poor remuneration, unfavorable policies like high imposition of taxes, and poor job security with non-pensionable salary. These challenges may have culminated into poor performance in the University ranking. The Nigerian Universities lack sufficient facilities and equipment to effectively deliver teaching and research programmes.

3.3 Poor Motivation

Teachers teaching in the Nigerian public schools are poorly motivated. Motivation is very key in educational institutions. A motivated teacher will do everything to ensure he or she discharges the responsibilities accordingly. Teachers in public schools in Nigeria are not well paid, their salaries are very poor and allowances are implemented as designed. Primary and secondary school teachers are more affected especially those working in the state owned schools. Public school teachers are been owned five to eight months salaries in some states. Ogunode & Paul (2021) opines that poor motivation of teachers is another factor responsible for shortage of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions. Nigerian teachers are poorly motivated and this is causing many professional teachers to leave the sector. Ogunode, (2020a) submitted that another problem preventing effective administration of basic schools in Nigeria is problem of poor motivation. Teachers teaching in the Nigerian basic schools are poorly motivated. While Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar (2021) observed that lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions are poorly motivated.

Adelabu (2005) found in Nigeria that teacher's motivation is very poor and teachers are also dissatisfied with their working environment and salary conditions. The reason behind the poor motivation of teachers is that they having low salaries as compared to other professionals, poor work environment, no decision making authority, and also not giving them opportunity of develop their career while Ogunode & Adamu (2020) submitted that poor motivation is another fundamental reason for shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public higher institutions. Academic staff working in the Nigerian higher institutions are poorly motivated. Their salaries are not good like other professionals, their working condition and welfare packages are poor and their salaries are not paid as at and when due. Many qualified trained teachers will not want to work in the educational institutions in Nigeria because of the level of motivation from the government. Obanya (1999), remarked that teachers in Nigeria are poorly motivated and dissatisfied with their living and working conditions. This marked the beginning of the teacher motivational crisis in Nigeria, as the public began to look down on those teachers who remained in the classroom as second-strong public servants. Mmadike (2006) found excess workload; low morale; inadequate remuneration; unattractive prospects for promotion and inadequate working conditions as sources of job dissatisfaction among University teachers in Nigeria. Every month, across the country, teachers are usually the last to be paid and they earn the least (Guardian, 2017).

3.4 Poor Capacity Development Programme

Poor capacity development programme is a major challenge facing the Nigerian teachers in public schools across the country. Training and retraining programme is vital to the development of teachers. As important as training and retraining programme is to the teachers' development, it is unfortunate that many public school teachers are not been exposed to training regularly. At the primary schools, Ogunode, Adah, Audu, Wama (2020), submitted that there are many challenges facing the staff development programme for primary school teachers in Nigeria. Some of the challenges include; inadequate funding, lack of strategic plans, poor implementation of staff development policies, institutional corruption, poor internal school administration of staff development programme for teachers, unstable educational policies, political instability and lack of data/information on training need gaps of schools. At the higher institutions, Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar (2021) submitted that poor capacity development is a problem facing majority of the academic staff of Nigerian Universities. Many lecturers in the Nigerian Universities are not given the opportunities to access funds to develop themselves. Guardian (2017) observed that the problem facing teachers in Nigeria cuts through the entire gamut of education from primary through secondary to the tertiary level. There is absolutely no commitment anywhere at any level of government in the country to turning around the education system of which teachers are a critical component. Only lip service is paid to building the nation's future.

3.5 Insecurity

According to Ogunode (2021), insecurity in educational institution implies the human resources within the educational institutions are in the state of fear or threat and lack peace to carry out their respective function. It is a situation where both school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students are in the state of fear. Educational institutions in Nigeria are under attacks. Both Basic schools, secondary schools and higher institutions. Teachers in all the forms of educational institutions are facing the problems of insecurity. At the Primary schools, Ogunode, (2020a) observed that insecurity is one of the major problem facing the administration of primary schools in Nigeria. Effective administration of basic education in Nigeria is frustrated by insecurity facing the country especially the Northern part of the country. Many Basic schools have been closed down. In the public secondary schools, Ogunode (2021) opines that insecurity is a problem facing the secondary schools in Nigeria especially in the Northern part of the country. Insecurity has prevented

effective administration of secondary school programme in the country. Many school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students have been killed. Some school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students have been kidnapped and many infrastructural facilities destroyed by Boko Haram. Secondary school programmes have been disrupted due to closing down of school in North-East Nigeria. In the higher institutions, Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar (2021) acknowledged that insecurity is a problem facing many academic staff and non-academic staff of Nigerian Universities. Many academic and non-academic staff have been killed and kidnapped by criminals especially the activities of the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) within the educational institutions where they are working. Insecurity has affected the entire educational system in some part of the country. Many Universities have been shut down in North-East part of Nigeria due to insecurity. Many higher institutions have also been closed down due to continuous attack on the schools' human and materials resources.

3.6 Poor ICT Knowledge and Skills

Poor ICT knowledge and skills is another problems teachers in the public schools in Nigeria are facing. Many teachers in the public schools across the country are not computer literate and this is affecting their job performance. ICT has been fully integrated into all the aspects of teaching and learning. ICT is used to deliver lesson while students also use it to aid their learning. The teachers need ICT knowledge to be able to operate it for lesson delivery and for implementation of other teaching programme like e-note, e-marking, e-teaching, e-assignment and reporting. Adelabu (2017) observed that teachers in public schools in Nigeria lack accurate ICT skills and knowledge to implement teaching programmes. This problem of poor ICT literacy is common to almost all the forms of Nigerian educational system. At the public higher institutions, Ogunode, Okwelogu, & Olatunde (2021), observed that another problem that prevented many tertiary institutions from deploying ICT fully for the implementation of teaching and learning programme during COVID-19 is the poor computer literacy of academic staff. Ogunode (2020) submitted that many academic staff in the Nigerian higher institutions are not computer literate and this is affecting the rate at which they are using ICT for teaching in the various institutions. Ogunode (2020a), Umar, Rosnaini, (2018) and Idowu, Esere, & Iruloh, (2017) submitted that many academic staff in the Nigerian higher institutions are not ICT and computer literate and this is limiting their usage of ICT for carrying out academic services. This is due to the fact that an average Nigeria University staff is not computer literate, which is disappointing in this modern digital era (Babatunde & Paschal, undated, Idowu & Esere, 2013).

3.7 Unconducive Working Environment.

Teachers in the Nigerian public schools are carrying out their teaching assignments in an unconducive working environment. It has been observed that working condition components such as, availability of working tools and equipment, presence of adequate working space needed to accomplish various tasks, leadership styles that give freedom of expression of personal desires, innovation and creativity, social work availability of different forms of motivators, a feeling of recognition and so on, were not adequately available. Teachers could be sitting in cluster of more than ten in a single room called, common room. Modern tools and equipment like interactive board could not be provided. Bornstein (2003) in his studies observed that in organizations where workers are exposed to stressful working conditions, productivity is influenced negatively and that there is a negative influence on the delivery of service. On the other hands, if working conditions are of quality, productivity increases and there is positive influence on the delivery service. It appears, some of the school heads are dictatorship. It also appears, some of the school heads are involved in nepotism and favouritism. Guardian (2017) submitted that across the country, teachers in both primary and secondary schools are unduly traumatized, as salaries and other entitlements are hardly

paid on time. The result is that the teaching profession has been bastardized and made unattractive, leading to a mass exodus of good hands to other means of livelihood. The experience of those who teach in schools for children of policemen is particularly disgusting, as they recently reached out to the Federal Government through the Federal Civil Service Commission, lamenting their poor working condition, lack of promotion and non-regularisation of their appointments. Haggai & Piwuna (2000) stated that the problem with the Nigerian teacher is that he suffers from lack of job satisfaction and is unmotivated and frustrated.

Guardian (2017) observed that teachers are, of course, among the most maltreated workers in the country and the case of those in police schools merely highlights the general situation in all public schools. Guardian (2017) opines that, promotion is a no-go area, not even on notional basis. Denying teachers promotion on the pretext that there are no offices to place them is tragic. The dignity for which teachers were known in the past has been eroded and the Nigerian authorities appear uninterested in learning the appropriate lessons.

3.0 Way Forward

The government should employ more teachers and deploy them to public school to reduce the high students-teacher ratio in classes and improve the quality of education.

More infrastructural facilities like offices and administrative, tables, tables, ICT facilities should be provided for the teachers. Government at every level should increase the funding of capacity development programmes for the teachers in public schools. Training is very important for the development of teachers. More security personnel should be employed and deploy to public educational institutions. There will be no improvement in education in the country until teachers are accorded due honour and are properly remunerated. Government should therefore pay special attention to this and treat teaching as a noble profession.

The package of teachers in terms of promotion, remuneration and welfare should be given special and urgent attention to encourage the best minds to go into teaching and for them to put in their best. Education, after all, should be the priority of any responsible government. The findings are in agreement with Kang et al. (2017) who stated that lecturers performances are increased when provided with spacious offices and classrooms which are well furnished with state of the art teaching and learning facilities like laptops, Wi-Fi, printers etc.

4.0 Conclusion

It is an understatement to say that public educational institutions in Nigeria are in a state of decadence. Only a visit to any public primary, secondary and perhaps tertiary institutions will explain the situation better. Lip service to the ugly scenario in the educational system portends danger and great injustice to posterity by leadership of the country. Therefore, there is no other proactive measure to deal with the identified problems raised in this paper than the government doing the needful promptly as recommended in the paper.

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