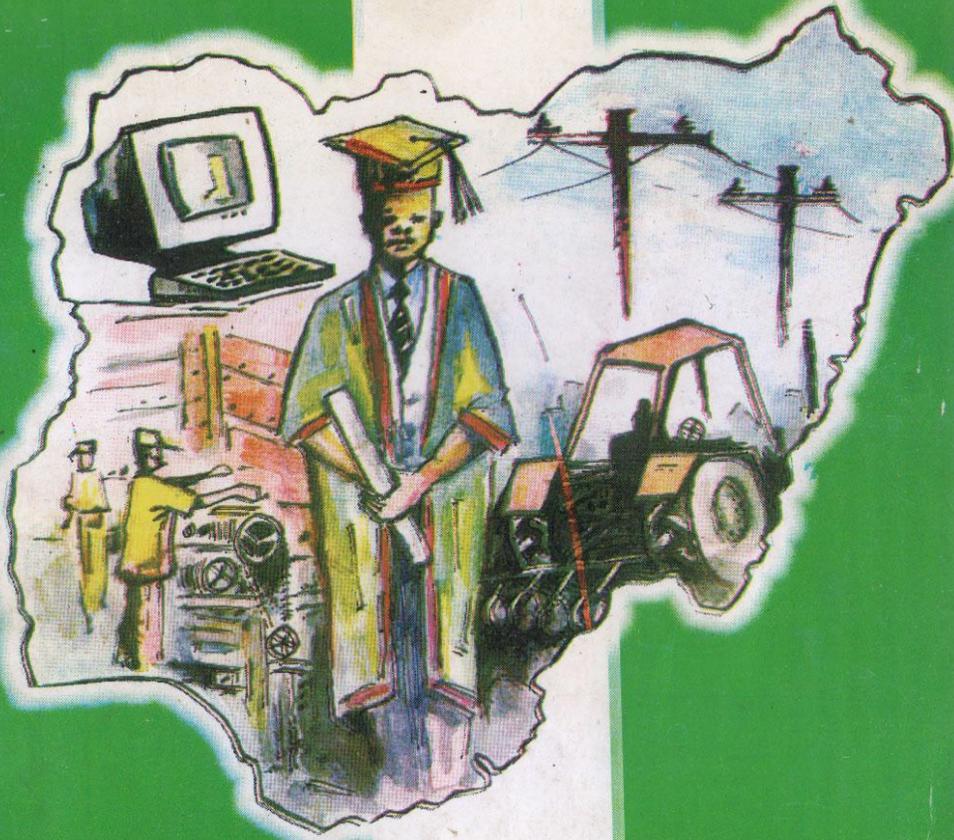


EDUCATION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA



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TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND PRODUCTIVITY: A MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Teacher professionalism is a very important tool for enhancing productivity at all levels of the educational system. However, teaching is not yet regarded as a full-fledged profession in Nigeria. This is due to inadequate training of teachers, employment of unqualified persons, poor remuneration and poor public image of teachers and teaching.

Introduction

In the recent past, it sufficed for anybody who had been to school — primary, secondary modern or secondary grammar- to learn on the job and teach. Teaching has become so intricate that adequate theoretical and practical training are inescapable.

Teaching as a profession requires intensive academic and professional preparation. The better prepared a teacher is, the more productive he is likely to be. Productivity here is in terms of providing meaningful teaching and learning activities necessary to accomplish the goals of the schools. However, unlike other professions such as law, medicine and engineering, the teaching profession is adversely affected by poor economic rewards and the consequent poor public image.

This paper seeks to examine the management of teaching as a profession and suggests measures of upgrading it to a full-fledged profession in order to bring about the much desired educational productivity

Concept of Professionalism in Teaching

Teaching is a method of imparting knowledge and it is useful in bringing up the young generation to take part in, and contribute to the development of the society. The aim of teaching, therefore, is to influence learners and bring about desirable changes in them (Olaitan and Agusiobo, 1981).

For improved educational productivity, therefore, there **must be** effective teaching that contributes to the learners' understanding, **helps** the learners to improve their abilities and develop more **desirable**

attitudes. For effective teaching to take place, however, there is the need for the teacher to be professionally trained.

A profession is a calling that requires specialized knowledge, usually acquired through long and intensive academic preparation. Hence, professionalism refers to specialized training in a particular profession in conformity with the technical and ethical standards of the profession. A profession has also been described as a form of employment, especially one that is respected in society as honorable and is possible only for an educated person and after training in some special branch of knowledge (Longman, 1987).

Professional associations for teachers in Nigeria include the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN), Mathematics Association of Nigeria (MAN), Nigerian Association of Business Educators (NABE) and Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS). Various disciplines in higher institutions also have associations for their teachers and other practitioners. These include Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) and Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON). Among the benefits accruing from professional associations include keeping the practitioners current and abreast of new developments in their field, and acquainting them with the ethics of the profession. In addition, the practitioners are given the necessary legal backing to operate.

Teacher professionalism, according to Marklund (1976) involves the mastery of the subject-matter and methodology of teaching it, understanding the students in terms of their development and learning activities, understanding the society at large and school-society relationship, and defining the teacher's role according to this knowledge. In concrete terms, the important disciplines where a teacher needs to be trained, in addition to subject-matter and methodology are philosophy, sociology, psychology and management, as relating to education.

Concept of Productivity

Productivity is viewed from different perspectives. One useful perspective views it as the relationship between output of goods and service and resource inputs (human and material) which are utilized in the production of goods and services (Amadi, 1991). Productivity is a measure of how efficiently a given set of resources is utilized to achieve

given set of objectives. Thus, educational productivity is the ratio between the contribution made by education to general development and the cost of education.

Productivity in education is intangible and invisible and can only be deduced from turnover, and the rate at which educational objectives are achieved. It is a continuous process, taking into consideration, the input, process and output phases of education. Teacher input refers to the teacher's performance determined by his/her abilities and motivations and technology and technical factors such as quality and quantity of instructional material.

Process refers to the managerial action necessary to improve the overall productivity of the school such as recruitment based on possession of skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to performance of the task of teaching. Output refers to students' learning. This implies the desired type, number and quality of educated persons produced.

An important measure of productivity is: the labour-input. Thus, teachers as labour-input are a very important measure of productivity. according to Prokopenko (1987), teachers occupy a central role as the principal resources in productivity in terms of application and effectiveness. Application is the degree to which teachers apply themselves to their work, while effectiveness is the extent to which Duplication of human effort brings the desired result in output and quality. is a function of method, technique, personal skill, knowledge, attitudes and aptitude. These can be improved through training and development, :-> rotation and placements, promotion and career planning.

Management of Teacher Professionalism and Productivity in Nigeria

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
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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

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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.

Conclusion

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.

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