

STATUS OF NIGERIA TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS ON STEAM EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are the professionals with the requisite knowledge needed for the students to learn using their content knowledge, experience and pedagogical skills. Furthermore, teachers teach, train, mentor and produce other professionals. Likewise, the educational and national development depends on the quality and quantity of professionals produced by teachers. Teachers also contribute to the development of STEAM education through which the development of a nation is achievable. Despite the crucial roles of teachers, their status in Nigeria among other professionals is poor. This poor status of Nigerian teachers is: affecting negatively, the global image and recognition of Nigeria professionals; causing relegation of educational qualities of Nigerians among other nations; responsible for retardation of Nigeria development. This paper therefore addressed; status of teachers among other professions in Nigeria, different status among Nigeria teachers, implications of status of Nigeria teachers on STEAM education and national development. To ensure quality STEAM education and national development, it was suggested that government should give Nigeria teachers recognition by; paying them good salaries, effecting their promotions promptly, sponsoring teachers in local, national and international seminars and protecting them from any form of harassment and intimidation among others.

Keywords: *Teachers' status, Implication, Educational Development, and Nigerian Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

A teacher is someone with requisite knowledge needed for the students to learn and possessed other values worthy of emulation by the students to gain acceptance in their immediate environment and the global world. Teachers are responsible for teaching at any level of academics, whether primary, secondary or tertiary institutions. Thomas (2013) stated that an effective teacher is primarily concerned with passing of necessary knowledge to the students, in an understandable manner using his or her pedagogical skills. Furthermore, the teacher performs the role of a mentor, counselor, guardian and parents among others both within the school and outside the school environment (Thomas, 2013). Therefore, the duties of a teacher go beyond the wall of a classroom.

Despite the important roles played by teachers in Nigeria, the status of teachers consistently remains poor among their counterparts in Africa and other advanced countries of the world in terms of salary, recognition, prospect, welfare, life after retirement, palliatives among others. For instance, according to Peter (2013), the most respected and high-status teachers are United Kingdoms' teachers followed by Finland teachers. Teachers in Brazil, china and Israel follow in status' index. In Africa, teachers in South Africa, Gambia, Ghana, and Egypt are well paid and well respected than Nigeria teachers. This is an indication that Nigeria teachers' status is low on the global teachers' status index.

The problem of low status of Nigeria teachers is contributing to poor Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education development in Nigeria. Since the inception of the world, STEAM had been applied on daily basis by human beings to find solutions to various challenges the environment put before them. These include; food production, health, shelter, clothing, education, transportation, security and so in Nigeria. According to Anaeto, Asiabaka, Ani, Nnadi, Ugwoke, Asiabaka, Anaeto and Ihehetonye (2016) education, through STEAM knowledge, is the key that unlocks the doors to progress and development of any nation. It also plays fundamental role in wealth creation, improvement of the quality of life and real economic growth and transformation in a society. Furthermore, the political power and strength of a nation depends on the level of STEAM education of her citizens.

Unfortunately, the status of teachers in Nigeria is negatively affecting STEAM education in Nigeria. This disheartening development generally affects the standard of education poorly in Nigeria. Therefore, Abimbola (2013) States that no educational standard can rise above the quality of its teachers. It was further ascertained that in as much as the condition of the teachers in Nigeria remain the same, the state of education may likely remain the same. By deduction, at the present, the status of Nigeria teachers and standard of education are poor. If something is not done to improve the status of Nigeria teachers, it may not be a realization improving the standard of education in Nigeria. The standard of education in United Kingdom is far better than what is observable in Nigeria, Among the reasons adduce for the differences is the fact that teachers in UK are of the same status with other professionals like medical Doctors. Been the personnel that train, mentor and produce other specialists, teachers are well respected in most of the advanced countries of the world (Thomas, 2013). The mention of one's job as a teacher in most of advanced countries of the world is accorded with self-esteem, recognition, joy among others. On the contrary, teachers are mostly relegated to almost nothing in Nigeria. Teachers are considered very poor, no one wishes to turn out his or her children a teacher.

The ugly image of teachers in Nigeria and the societal views about Nigeria teachers contribute negatively to the educational development in Nigeria. Osokoya (2012) states that due to poor status of teachers in Nigeria, the menace of brain-drain is evident. Larger percentage of qualified and experienced teachers who had their ways run to other countries where they are well paid and respected as well. Osokoya (2012) also claimed that larger number of unqualified teachers, less-experienced teachers and qualified teachers that could not have their ways to other countries or professions unwillingly remain in the services of teaching in Nigeria. This situation of lack of

enthusiasm in the job due to poor status of Nigeria teachers among other professions negatively affects their attitudes to teaching.

Evidence showed that many teachers engage in other businesses to make ends meet. The attitude that is negatively affecting their dedication and commitment to the job. Priority is given in most cases to the business than the teaching job. Akintola (2018) also identifies that the poor status of teachers and other professions negatively affects educational and national development. Furthermore, many teachers are tired of the work due to the way's government are treating them. Such governments' frustrating attitudes include irregular payment of salary, failure to implement teachers' promotion, and undue harassment from various angles among others.

In the same direction, though the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2013) in the document titled Teachers' Code of conduct, teaching is confirmed a profession with rights and benefits accorded it. But it is frustrating that Nigeria government takes delight in executing the aspects that deal with teachers' discipline, duties to students/pupils, government and society while aspects that treated teachers' development, promotion, recognition, remuneration, rights and welfare among others are often neglected by the government. Therefore, this paper treats; status of teachers among other professions, different status among Nigeria teachers, implications of status of teachers on STEAM education and national development.

Nigeria Teachers' Status versus Other Professions

Despite the fact that other professionals are taught, mentored, trained and produced by teachers, it is a fact that the status of teachers among others is poor. The assessment is due to:

- 1) Poor salary package for teachers compared with medical doctors, pharmacists, lawyers etc.
- 2) Poor image of teachers among other professionals. Generally, teachers are seen as poor members of Nigeria workforce. Parents, guardians, communities do not wish to train their children to become a teacher. On the contrary, people love and are always happy to be associated with Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Pharmacists either directly or indirectly.
- 3) Poor welfare is another contributor to poor status of Nigeria teachers. For instance, there are special welfare packages for medical doctors from several national and international bodies such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) (Stacy, 2013). Lawyers also enjoyed special welfare packages from Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) and other allied groups. Regrettably, such opportunities are not open to Nigeria teachers.
- 4) Poor prospect of teaching compared with other professions. Physicians have access to private practice, consultancy services, overseas tour and almost automatic job opportunity (Stacy, 2013). Likewise, lawyers can get money from different angles such as; private practice, salary from government, being private lawyer to company,

groups and individuals, charge and bail services. But such opportunities are not open to teachers.

- 5) Poor standard of living during active service and after retirement. Good salary package is paid to lawyers, physicians, pharmacists, etc., with special provisions to make life more comfortable for them after retirement. For example, a retired judge in Nigeria is entitled to a police man to secure his house among other benefits (Peter, 2013). But for Nigeria teachers, the salary is poor during active service. Such salary is not promptly paid. After retirement, some teachers could not get their gratuity and pension till they die. Such aberration is not applicable to other professionals.

Different Status among Nigeria Teachers

It is surprising in Nigeria that the status of teachers across various institutions varies, the situation that is not operating in most advanced countries of the world. The salary paid to the lecturers in tertiary institutions is better than what is paid to teachers in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Hence, tertiary institutions' teachers are of higher status than primary and secondary schools' teachers. Even in higher institutions, University lecturers' salary is better than polytechnic and colleges of education lecturers. Also, the status of federal government teachers is different from state government teachers

In Nigeria across all levels of schooling, the salary of federal teachers is different from state teachers' salary. The minimum wage approved by federal government for teachers or workers is subjected to negotiation by state government. This frustrating attitude from the government accounts for why so many people dumped their passionate job for the job they do not have interest in but the salary attached (Akintola, 2018). The implications include, low productivity, lack of required knowledge, embezzlement, and the host of unexpected behaviour. Likewise, the status of private teachers is low to that of government teachers.

Despite the fact that teachers working in private schools attended the same institutions with government teachers, obtained the same certificates, discharged the same duties (teaching) and buy from the same markets, it has been established that private school teachers are poorly paid compared with government teachers. Also, private school teachers are not entitled to gratuity, pension or retirement benefits (Peter, 2013). These situations have contributed to their low status to their government teachers' counterparts. The poor status of teachers among other professions and their colleagues respectively has negative implications on STEAM education and national development.

Implications of Status of Teachers on STEAM Education

According to Kim and Diong (2012), if teachers are of high status, the following responsibilities are expected from them. But due to their low status in Nigeria, the expectations may not be achievable:

1. Attainment of scientific, technological, engineering, arts and mathematical literacy – Teachers could help in the training of citizens in STEAM. Such citizens will have

the knowledge required to develop educationally and in all spheres of life. But the low status of Nigeria teachers is a huge set back to such achievement (Diong, 2012).

2. Application of STEAM -based and inquiry-based science curriculum for basic education-This developmental and integrated approach to curriculum planning, teaching and learning is achievable through dedicated teachers (Diong, 2012).
3. Production of professionally competent staff in different ministries that can help in producing appropriate leadership that could bring innovations and develop the nation.
4. Education for all through social media - Relevant information required for appropriate leadership, innovations and national development via Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Eskimi, Badoo etc. are attainable through STEAM education and qualified STEAM teachers in the area of computer, Information Communication Technology (ICT) etc.
5. Air care and solid waste management to prevent air pollution, air-borne diseases and other health challenges that may originate from poor waste management for individuals and the nation as a whole is attainable through teachers in all respect.

Furthermore, Olagoke and Salami (2017) identifies the following negative implications of poor status of Nigeria teachers on STEAM education:

1. STEAM subjects are not widely taught enough at both primary and post primary institutions due to lack of dedicated and motivated teachers to teach STEAM based subjects due to poor status of teachers;
2. Inadequate STEAM teachers characterize our schools due to lack of interest in the teaching profession. Also, some school heads, principals and teachers are not interested in STEAM teaching due to uncared attitudes of government to their welfare. The implication of this is that the country could not produce appropriate leadership that will bring about innovations and development in Nigeria;
3. Lack of technical know-how by professionals due to inadequate knowledge from the teachers that taught them at various levels of schooling. This is partly due to the fact that they were taught and trained by teachers that are not happy doing the job all those that see teaching as their last option but not because they have interest in doing it;
4. Uneven / patchy teaching of STEAM in most of our schools by non-dedicated teachers due to poor salary package; and
5. STEAM is taught by unspecialized and unqualified teachers in most schools. This reduces the impacts of STEAM on our societies in producing appropriate leadership, innovations and development.

Implications of Status of Nigeria Teachers on National Development

In line with the claim of Ezeh (2006), the political power and strength of a nation depends on the level of education of her citizens. Such education is made

available by the teachers. The implication has been felt negatively on various fields and areas of Nigeria professionalism.

In the area of medicine, it has been observed that Nigeria trained Doctors could not gain appointment outside Nigeria, most especially in the advanced countries (Akintola, 2018). Among the reasons adduced was that: they lack the necessary knowledge, skills and training needed by them to perform to the level of global expectation: they were probably taught by low status teachers in term of quality and dexterities. This is due to the fact that qualified teachers in the areas have rather travelled outside the countries for greener pasture or seek other better appointment because they are not well paid by Nigeria government.

Furthermore, Nigerian engineers are not employable outside the country. Practical knowledge and skills are lacking in the qualities of Nigeria engineers. They are grossly fed with theoretical knowledge but the required skills for practical applications are lacking. This is due to the fact that the teachers that trained them do not have the knowledge and enthusiasm in equipping them with all it takes to be able to discharge their duties as qualified engineers.

Numerous electrical engineers in Nigeria are requiring the services of local apprentice to rectify electrical issues for them. Also, mechanical engineers do request the services of road side mechanics to fix their car faults for them. Building engineers could not interpret building plans less construct a building (Akintola, 2019). The local bricklayers are used by most of them to execute most of their contracts. The resultant effects include: collapsed buildings, lack of durability in facilities and other low-quality related problems.

In the area of Education, none of Nigeria universities is ranked among the best 100 universities of the world. The grading is based on the qualities of the students produced, projects executed and exhibited and other contributions to the world. Universities that were rated well probably have qualified teachers that gave the necessary knowledge and skills to the students. Such teachers are well paid and received Very Important Person (VIP) treatments from their government and citizens. For instance, according to Stacy (2013), in America, the categories of professionals given VIP's treatment are: Scientists, Doctors, Engineers and Teachers. In the honorable court of France, only teachers are allowed to sit on chairs. In Japan, police must take special permission from government to arrest teachers. But unfortunately, Nigeria teachers are treated poorly and relegated almost to nothing. Thus, their deliveries to students cannot accrue better global performance to Nigeria institutions among other institutions of the world.

More so, the citizens produced are not turning out as good leaders. This is seriously affecting Nigerians politically. Leaders in Nigeria lack spirit of patriotism. Patriotism was described by Akintola (2019) as virtue for a better Nigeria. Such virtues for a developed nation are formally learnt in schools. Unfortunately, because of the poor status of teachers, most students did not listen to their teachers' admonition as they are considered a bad example for emulation because they are poor. They consider corrupt members of society that are living flamboyant life as the best people to live up to. The

resultant effects include dragging the image of Nigeria in the mud both nationally and internationally (Akintola, 2018). Instead of leaders to bring innovations that will develop the nations in all spheres, they are embracing programs and policies that will enrich them illegally at the detriment of the citizens. Akintola (2019) claims that Nigerians find it convenient to betray their country for selfish interest. If correct virtues for better leadership were instilled in the students through their teachers in schools, all Nigerians will turn out a good leader and ambassador wherever they are called to serve.

In the area of law, Nigeria legal system is bad. According to Akintola (2018), highest bidders win cases in most cases. Yet our judiciaries were trained in schools but they turned out to promote corruption and insincerities. Some of them refuse offer of teaching in their various institutions because their lecturers were seen as poor people but considered practicing as a lawyer as a means of getting rich quick. Practicing lawyers jettison the oath they made and engage in all forms of illegal practices to make money (Akintola, 2018). All the knowledge given to them at the law school was not considered to make them a better lawyer because their lecturers were poor. The problem of poor status of teachers in Nigeria has affected all the areas mentioned negatively among others.

CONCLUSION

This write up concludes that: the status of Nigeria teachers is poor. The poor status of Nigeria teachers affected the development of STEAM education through which the nation can develop. Also, due to poor status of Nigeria teachers, appropriate leadership needed for national development cannot be produced. Required innovations and development could not be attained due to poor status of teachers. It has been concluded that the images of Nigeria professionals are poor globally due to the poor status of Nigeria teachers as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was suggested that:

1. Nigeria teachers' salary should be equivalent to what is paid to their counterparts in other countries of the world and other professionals within Nigeria;
2. Nigeria teachers' salary should be paid promptly and regularly by the governments;
3. Teachers should be sponsored to local, national and international seminars by the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and philanthropies;
4. Government should effect Nigeria teachers' promotion as entrenched in the code of conduct through the various ministries that are concerned and connected with such duty;
5. Required recognitions should be given to Nigeria teachers both by the government and the society; and
6. Government should ensure proper care for retired teachers in terms of prompt payment of their gratitude and regular payment of their pension.

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