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Teachers' competence for effective teaching and learning for the 21st century schools in Nigeria

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study is to consider the competence of teachers for effective teaching and learning for the 21st century schools in Nigeria. It is an opinion paper and adopts literature analysis. The study focuses on the concept of competence and further attempts to identify some common teachers' competence. Some constraints to these competencies were discussed and recommendations also proffered.

Keywords: Competence, teachers competence, constraints to teachers, 21st century schools

Introduction

In our everyday life, knowledge is indispensable. The knowledge, skill and capability of one teacher distinguishes him/her from another. The teacher should be multifaceted in various ways he or she conducts and facilitates his or her teaching, counselling, supervision, and students evaluation. There is a common saying that the quality of a Nation depends on the quality of its citizens and the quality of the citizens depends on the quality of their education and the quality of education depends on the quality of its teachers.

Many countries have realized that teachers play a major role in their education process. Nigeria is not left out in this belief. Teachers are sometimes called the child's locus parentice, their next God, with regards to the image and character mouldings of the school child.

In this era of connectivism, constructivism and cognitivism, teacher's roles have changed dramatically and as such most teaching and learning processes in the classroom are changing from autocratic style to democratic/participatory style where learning is promoted by active involvement of the entire class. Following this new development, much professionalism are needed of teachers in the 21st Century Schools. That's to say that the new teachers must be provided with some survival wherewithal instructional knowledge, skills, competencies and values if they must be placed on their right professional platform. The new teacher would no longer be an authoritarian, a receptacle or repository of knowledge, packaged to be swallowed by helpless learners. Rather, the 21st Century teacher should play the function of an instructor, a facilitator, constructor, coach and creator of school learning environment. It is on this basis that this paper is provided. To do this, the concepts of competence and teacher's competence are provided to guide the paper.

The Concept of Competence

Every position needs its own special skill, so in handling a task, there is an ability and capacity needed in order to reach an effective and a smooth result and its expectations. However, competence is a criterion for a position of a job.

Competence is a word that consists of different skills which is classified under knowledge, attitude and skills to improve performance. It is essential to an educators pursuit of excellence.

Competence is a comprehensive concept for abilities or capabilities of people or organizations (Mulder, 2001) [7]. This means that competence could be personal such as teacher competence or non-personal, as in team competence (general competence needed in an organization).

Competence could be regarded as a rational factor that meets the performance objective for a desired condition.

It is a behavioural off-shoot needed to achieve the purpose required in accordance with the conditions expected.

Boyatis (2007) [1], says that "competence is an underlying characteristics of individual that is casually (change in one variable causes a change in another) related to superior performance in a job". Having said that, what then is a teacher's competence?

Teacher's Competence

A leading authority, M.C.Leod (in Usman, 2014) [2] explains that competence of a teacher is the teacher's ability to implement the obligations in a responsible and viable way. A competent teacher is the most critical piece in improving student's achievement and closing the achievement gap. The single most important influence on students learning is the quality of teaching, yet most schools don't define what good teaching is (Danielson, 2006) [3].

Mulyasa (2002), suggests that the competences of a teacher in the knowledge, abilities and skills are controlled by someone who had to be him so that he can perform the behaviors of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of objectives, as much as possible.

Teacher's competence enhances a teachers ability to create an environment that is fair, understanding, and accepting of diversed students' ideas, experiences, values and backgrounds.

General Teacher's Competence

This is the type of competence that every teacher (18th century, 19th century, 20th century) ensures he/she has in making positive impact in his or her students. They include, but not limited to the following:

- Teacher-student relationship. Such teachers should be competent to interact well with students irrespective of their backgrounds, ethnicities, economic and social statuses, and personalities.
- Preparation of good lesson plan design that requires creating a scope and sequence that provides students with enough time to master the instructional outcome and maintain acceptable standards.
- Capable of using different teaching strategies, capable of accommodating limited differing learning styles.
- Capable of forming assessment techniques in other to monitor students performance progress.
- Cooperating with other teachers or encouraging synergies between fellow staff of the school to achieve, not only in a specific lesson but in achieving the school curriculum or mission.
- Capable of communicating with parents and guidance of students.

Perception of Teachers' Competence for the 21st Century Schools

Globally the approach in solving teaching and learning challenges in schools has changed from analog to digital. Learners, these days are more knowledgeable, more interrogative, more competitive and more demanding from their teachers (Sharma, 2017) [8]. What then does the school expect from teachers? What instructional skills will 21st century teachers need to prepare our students with? How can this 21st century teachers be distinguished from those of the past centuries? The difference is in the practices that will promote teacher's effectiveness and competency. Those essential predictors which are capable of placing teachers on a fast lane while achieving a sustainable instructional outcomes are catalogued as follows:

- The teacher in the century needs to be held to high ethical standards and to implement research based best practices in their classroom teaching tasks.
- The teacher in this 21st century should be capable to pilot and guide the teaching and learning experiences of the learner and he prepares the environment that is smart and technologically enhanced for learning to happen and sustain.
- The teacher should adopt active teaching strategies to foster effective learning. This is to say that the theory of constructivism should be adoption to allow learners utilize and construct their own world and arrive at their own versions of the truth.
- Teachers should encourage connectivism in their approach as tactics to help students and teachers share and network their skills and aspirations. Connectivism emphasizes on the roles of solving problems through networking of ideas, experience and aspirations in today's society and according to Siemens (2o14) [9] an important vehicle to link ideas, facts and informations.
- Lentell (2003) [6] states that teachers have to be knowledge experts, effective listeners and communicators as well as coaches, facilitators, mentors, problem solvers and resource coordinators. The 2ist century teacher therefore has to be resourceful in finding or forging out new relevant informations.
- A 21st century teacher encourages students even when they seem weak, disorganized and unmotivated. He should be the parent in school, a counsellor and a model of his or her students.
- A 21st century teacher does not exact or extort from students.
- A 21st century teacher is a model in great moral values and punctuality (Ekpo, 2010) [5].
- Above all, A 21st Century teachers should be competent in the use and applications of the state-of-the-arts in information and communication technologies to promote the best practices in any area of learning.

Constraints to Teachers' Competencies for the 21st Century Schools in Nigeria

There are a number of problems and challenges that tend to constrains teachers from being competent in achieving their job tasks. Some of these problems are:

1. Difficult working condition. Many teachers work under hostel environment. Observation shows that an average school doesn't provide a healthy space.
2. Teachers remuneration are irregular, delayed and an comparably low.
3. Overcrowded classrooms. In many classrooms, students/teachers ratios are very inappropriate and so defile any good competencies.
4. Unsafe school culture and ethos. Many schools are corrupted and an assessment results which are a fallout of examination malpractice could be inherited by an incubent class teachers and this phenomenon can jeopardize a teacher's competence.
5. Lack of or inadequacy in teaching and learning materials to properly engage and challenge both the teachers and students in carrying out their tasks.
6. Lack of systems and incentives to encourage and help teachers improve their practice.

7. A proper evaluation of teachers at the point of their recruitment and the problem of mismatch between what a teacher studied in school and what he or her is assigned to teach. This practice is common among some private schools
8. Teachers education curricular are not critically enough on teachers competences. Their appears to be a *lacuna* between the status quo and the expected compences of the 21st Century teachers.
9. Lack of commitment by the school management in providing learning devices and resources, expecially the consumables and improvised media to meet local demands
10. Lack of retraining or refresher course for teachers to regularly update their competences.
11. Inadequate, irregular and high cost of Power supply: This is one of the biggest challenges that limit teachers exhibiting his or her competences in school learning environment. Under this challenge will include the poor state of communication network. In Nigeria, many schools are located in rural isolatory communities where communication network is not available and this could frustrate the the work of any competent teacher in carrying out his or her functions.

Conclusion

The idea of having a highly qualified competent teacher is a good one and cannot be over-emphasized, but compliance to this desire has not been widespread (Viadera, 2007). Beyond the quest for being up to date on the latest technology, teachers can have the characteristics of being a facilitator, a contributor, or even an integrator. Contemporary teacher competence however requires new approach towards teaching which will produce an active, creative and open broad learning and open-minded learners. Towards this effort, schools will become a better place for learning if teachers are provided with competences for the 21st Century Schools in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- The 21st Century school teachers in Nigeria should be ready to accept and adopt the research supported best practices in their teaching competences if they must achieve their instructional goals.
- Teachers should be willing to be a lifelong learners by regularly updating their competences to meet current educational trends and technologies.
- Teachers welfare should be the priority of the school management. Both Federal, State and private schools should be committed in providing enablement to help teachers demonstrate their competences.
- Teacher should teach a total child through the multiple perspectives approach. There a host of technologies that can carry all the learners along.
- Teachers should be able to utilize everything that is important in today's world so that students will be able to live proper in today's economy as well as having the ability to guide students and to prepare them for the future.
- The Minister of State for Education should ensure that all unqualified and quack teachers, in both public and private schools across the country should be provided with teaching education that highlights the major teaching competences for a sustainable learning for the 21st Century.
- The Federal and State governments should pay attention to all deficiencies in the Teachers Education programmes in the country as most of their school curricular seem not to meet the need of the 21st century teachers in the field.

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