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## IMPROVING TEACHER PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE FOR BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES IN NIGERIA PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

The paper x-rays school productivity in relation to teachers' productivity in secondary schools. The productivity of teachers in schools has reportedly declined over the years. This assertion is evident from the visible poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations. It specifically assesses the performance of students in two key subjects (English Language and Mathematics) in external examinations held in Nigeria. The paper is of the view that most of the seemingly poor performance of our school system lies on the deficiencies and ineffectiveness of our poorly trained and poorly motivated teachers. The reasons for this apparent low teacher productivity in schools are discussed as well as the challenges and role of the teacher for improved productivity in the school. It further discusses the factors militating against effective classroom management. The principles and strategies for effective classroom management are also discussed. The paper concludes that a concerted effort is needed to improve the performance of teachers in public schools for the benefit of the entire school system. It identifies an effective classroom management as key to increasing the productivity of teachers and the learning outcome of students in schools. These include ensuring a hygienic and congenial physical classroom structure; having a good mastery of the subject matter; use of appropriate methods of instruction; and ensuring that teaching and learning is done under organized, planned, and fortified environment with teaching/learning instructional aids to stimulate students' sense of conception, perception and concentration to facilitate systematic understanding and acquisition of knowledge in them.

## Introduction

The teacher is undoubtedly the most important factor for achieving a profitable learning outcome in every school system. The future of any nation, to a very large extent, is contingent upon the quality of its teachers. Therefore, those to be recruited as teachers should be people who have demonstrated some measure of competence in knowledge and skills as well as possess a healthy attitude for the achievement of the schooling objectives.

As the population of school-age children grows, the problem of increased demand for teachers (both qualified and not qualified) also persists, thus, making the teaching profession the largest employment in the world (Babalola, 2011). Nevertheless, in spite of the growing number of teachers in employment, school productivity seemed not to have satisfactorily improved as expected.

The cause of this unsatisfactory state of affairs had been linked to many factors, among which is the low level of teachers' productivity which in itself is due to lack of basic knowledge and skills that could improve teacher performance in their service delivery. Thus, there seems to be a positive relationship between the teachers' level of professional development and their performance in the classrooms.

Unfortunately, however, the productivity of teachers in schools has reportedly declined over the years. This is evident from the visible poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations. For instance, in 1999 about 757,233 candidates sat for the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in English Language, out of which 73,531 or 9.71% passed with the grade of A1-C6 while 22.59% (171,098) passed with the grade P7-P8. A total of 64.9% failed the English Language examination for that year. In Mathematics, about 50.35% recorded failure. In the year 2000, 2002, and 2003, failure in English Language was 64%, 42.6% and 33.8% respectively. *But the failure rate has been declining here!*

This high failure rate was also recorded in the recent National Examinations Council's (NECO) results for both English Language and Mathematics as shown in Tables 1a and 1b.

**Table 1a: Analysis of Students' Performance in English Language and Mathematics, 2001-2005 (NECO SSCE Internal) with Passes from A1-E8**

Year	English Language			Mathematics		
	Total Sat	Total Passed	% Passed	Total Sat	Total Passed	% Passed
2001	914,705	673,136	73.5	914,852	584,370	63.8
2002	1,034,488	960,019	92.8	1,034,428	938,010	90.6
2003	902,300	538,269	59.6	902,242	478,735	53.0
2004	897,397	537,466	59.8	897,432	508,425	56.6
2005	876,500	497,666	56.7	876,430	557,079	63.5

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2007

In the year 2003, 2004 and 2005, statistics showed that of the 902,300; 897, 397 and 876, 500 students who sat for the senior National Examinations Council (NECO) examinations in English Language, 538,269 (59.6%) 537,466 (59.8%) and 497, 666 (56.7%) respectively passed the examinations. Similarly in the Mathematics examination for those years (2003, 2004 and 2005), about 902,242; 897,432 and 876,430 respectively sat for the examinations. The results showed that 478,335 (53.01%); 508,425 (56.6%) and 557,079, (63.5%) passed the examinations (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

**Table 1b: Analysis of Students' Performance in English Language and Mathematics, 2006-2010 (NECO SSCE Internal) with Passes from A1-C6**

Year	English Language			Mathematics		
	Total Sat	Total Passed	% Passed	Total Sat	Total Passed	% Passed
2006	901,135	442,333	49.1	897,791	434,809	48.4
2007	989,765	514,893	52.0	961,955	524,325	54.5
2008	1,108,826	837,541	75.5	1,092,215	776,745	71.1
2009	1,168,286	273,279	23.3	1,163,429	316,049	27.1
2010	1,116,195	245,890	22.0	1,113,177	285,146	25.6

Source: National Examinations Council (NECO), 2011

Results from Table 1b showed that 48.4% or less than half of the total number of students who sat for the Mathematics examination in 2006 passed at credit level. In 2007, the percentage of students who had between A1-C6 in Mathematics gradually increased to 54.5% representing about 12.6% improvement in performance. The most



successful period was in 2008 when there was an appreciable improvement in students' performance in Mathematics with 71.1% pass (A1-C6) out of the over 1 million candidates that sat for the examination. However, a dismal failure was recorded in the subject in 2009 with only 27.1% passing at credit level between A1-C6. In the succeeding year, 2010, the failure rate further worsened. The total number of students who passed at credit level stood at 285,146 out of 1,113,117 implying a success rate of only 25.6%.

In the same vein, Table 1b showed that in 2006, only 38.1% of the 901,135 candidates who sat for the English Language examination passed at credit level between A1-C6. In 2008, the performance equally improved with 75.5% pass at credit level between A1-C6. Nevertheless, as in the Mathematics result for 2009 and 2010, the percentage of students who had A1-C6 in English Language stood at 23.3% and 22.0% respectively. All of these represent an unpleasant and unsatisfactory state of affairs in our school system. Although it will be an unfair conclusion to lay the blame solely on the standard and quality of our teaching personnel, nonetheless a general claim that most of the seemingly poor performance of our school system lies on the deficiencies and ineffectiveness of our poorly trained and poorly motivated teachers. Teachers seem not to show serious commitment to their work due to obvious neglect by the government and the society at large. This action has therefore had negative consequences on school quality and school productivity.

In a study by Bolarinwa (1994), and cited in Ajayi (2004), it was discovered that about 63% of the 510 public school teachers sampled had taken to alternative supportive jobs to survive. While 59.22% regretted being teachers, 78.82% felt that they would not be teachers again if given a fresh opportunity to make choice of career in life; and about 82.35% declared that they were not satisfied with the teaching profession.

### **Concept of Productivity in Education**

Productivity is a concept often misinterpreted with efficiency by many people. However, both concepts exhibit similarity, yet they are different economic concepts. In the formal educational system, both concepts each refer to a different relationship between inputs and outputs. Inputs are the resources used to produce education, such as per-student expenditures; student-teacher ratios; teacher education, experience, and salary; school facilities; and administrative factors, the teachers' time; buildings; learning materials; equipment; students,

time, etc. While outputs are the products of education such as the number of students who are educated, their qualifications, their cognitive learning, the cultural, sporting and life skills they have obtained, the welfare services provided by the schools, etc, (Marginson, 1991). It is important to note that output is distinct from objectives. While objectives encompass broad purpose of education service, for example, vocational training, intellectual, physical growth of the students, etc, output, on the other hand refers to the specific means by which these broad objectives are achieved. For instance, equality of opportunity or access to education is an objective, but achieving a target of 40% female access of the available opportunity in that form of education is an output.

Thus, while efficiency is more concerned with the internal cost of the production process, productivity, in its own right, focuses more on output. Productivity can best be understood as output per unit of measured input. When comparing productivity, we hold input constant while output is allowed to vary. For example, we can hold the service of a teacher constant while expecting his output to increase, that is, we vary his or her output. Thus, productivity increases when the same input leads to a greater output than before. Productivity can either be measured in money or physical terms. In classical term, productivity can be defined as physical output per unit of labour time (Kendrick, 1985). Thus, when we talk of higher productivity, it enables us to evaluate the number of products the worker has produced with the given input available to the workers. School productivity invariably refers to the results that a school system is achieving for a given level of inputs.

According to Babalola (2009), the general belief is that productivity can be increased by increasing the labour supply, increasing the hour worked and increasing wages. However, greater productivity does not come from spending more or from working harder, but smarter (Ashenden, 1990). The bottom line therefore is that productivity is concerned mainly with the maximization of output. The question therefore relates to how many students have we been able to influence positively as teachers? The greater the number, the greater our productivity in absolute terms. In this way therefore, we define productivity in terms of the goal satisfaction which is measured by the relationship between services rendered to our consumers/clients (students) and the broad objectives of the educational system (Tegle, 1988; Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, 1986; in Marginson 1991). Although these concepts and

definitions are not exhaustive, the focus of productivity in education is centred mainly on the output of the teachers in terms of their ability to increase the learning achievement of students through an effective classroom interaction and management.

### **Reasons for Low Teacher Productivity in Schools**

Generally, the research exploring teacher motivational issues in Nigeria shows that teachers are poorly motivated and are dissatisfied with their living and working conditions. The key reasons for this are as follows:

- Low wages when compared with other professionals
- Low status in the society
- Lack of career advancement opportunities
- High student-teacher ratio
- Poor work environment
- Inadequate fringe benefits
- Irregular payment of teachers' salaries

According to the literature, these conditions are responsible for low teacher morale and productivity and the difficulty in attracting and retaining quality personnel into the teaching profession. This has not always been the case. A broad consensus is that, prior to independence, teaching was considered by almost all sections of society as a highly respected profession. Teachers played key leadership roles in local communities and acted as role models. However, after Independence, when the demand for educated labour grew rapidly, many teachers left the profession to take up jobs elsewhere in the public and private sector. According to Obanya (1999), this marked the beginning of the teacher motivation crisis in Nigeria as the public began to look down on those teachers who remained in the classroom as second-string public servants. The growing tendency for school leavers to opt for teaching only if they are unable to find other more lucrative public or private sector employment further compounded this problem of lowered professional status (Lawal, 2000). According to Dr. Owusu (The Punch Newspapers, 2004), who once led the accreditation team of the National Commission for Colleges of Education, remarked that the teaching profession in Nigeria had been relegated to the background and that teaching is not accorded the respect it deserves.

A major finding in a study by Kazeem (1999) is that teachers and other school workers tend to remain contented and reasonably motivated as long as salaries are paid on time and they are promoted regularly. Much earlier, Eton (1984) also identified the payment of salaries, allowances and promotion as the key factors that shape teacher attitudes towards their work. Similarly, Amadi (1983), also concluded that the irregular payment of salaries is one of the major problems facing the teaching profession in Nigeria. According to Mbanefoh (1982), practicing teachers are particularly concerned about the late payment of salaries and the non-payment of fringe benefits rather than other non-monetary incentives. School principals often complained about teachers not willing to work because of delays in payment of their salaries (Ayeri, 2005). Ubom (2002), found that in Nigeria, prompt payment of salaries induced greater commitment to teaching.

According to Adelabu (2005), another major source of teacher dissatisfaction in Nigeria arises from disparities between the teaching profession and other professions, such as nursing, with respect to the time and mode of payment of salaries, fringe benefits, promotion prospects and working conditions. However, no consensus exists on the extent to which financial inducements are the really critical motivators. Research has shown that monetary reward in itself has not improved teachers' low esteem and their productivity. Youlonfoun (1992), argues that, although good salaries and their prompt payment are important motivating factors, there is evidence that other factors can undermine commitment to teaching. It was therefore not a surprise when Akinwumi (2000) and Ejiogu (1990) found that what the typical low income earning teacher yearns for is a sizeable salary increase, and they conclude that the payment of a living wage would significantly enhance their commitment and performance.

Next to pay is the social status of teachers which has been identified as an important factor impacting teacher morale and motivation (Baikie 2002, Francis 1998, and Obanya 1999). Where teachers feel society is dismissive of the profession, their commitment is undermined. Promoting teachers *en masse*, without basing it on an evaluative mechanism linked to job performance, has also been found to de-motivate many teachers in Nigeria (Yisa, 1975; Obilade, 1989; Sanusi, 1998).

School leadership and management style are also important factors, which can either motivate or lower teacher morale and commitment. Nwankwo (1984), found that teachers feel highly

motivated when they are consulted about decisions regarding their work. Unfortunately, too high a proportion of school managers (principals and head teachers) are highhanded and autocratic in their dealings with teachers (Ayeni, 2005). The attitude of inspectors towards teachers in supervising their work is another important work-related motivational factor. Bamisaiye (1998), found that unfair administrative and supervisory practices tend to undermine teacher morale.

The work environment is also an important determining factor in teacher motivation. The teacher's working environment in Nigeria has been described as the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force (NPEC, Nigeria 1998). Facilities in most schools are dilapidated and inadequate, (Sanusi, 1998; Adelabu, 2003). Kazeem (1999), recommended that greater attention should be given to improving work-related conditions of teachers to improve the quality of education. In particular, there should be improvements in the supply of teaching and learning materials and general classroom environment to improve student learning. Kazeem (1999) and Akinwumi (2000) found that private school teachers appear more motivated than teachers in public schools. Regular payment of salaries and much lower pupil-teacher ratios are key reasons for this. Muheeb (2004) found that the conditions for teaching are more conducive in private secondary schools in Lagos State especially because the maximum class size is only 30 in private schools compared to well over 80 in public schools.

Unarguably, this state of disequilibrium will certainly affect the level of productivity and consequently, the learning outcome in schools. This paper attempts to provide some probable strategies for improving teachers' productivity through an effective classroom interaction and management. The paper therefore discusses the concepts of productivity (school productivity) as it relates to the teacher, the role of the teacher and some visible challenges facing the teachers and how these challenges could be improved upon to guarantee an effective and efficient service delivery among teachers, especially in our public secondary schools.

### **Challenges and Role of the Teacher for improved Productivity in the School**

The challenges facing the effectiveness of teachers in the real classroom situation today are enormous. The teacher's productive capacity has been compounded by the problems of inadequate teaching skills/techniques, harsh environment for effective learning,

poor socio-economic background statuses of students, particularly in public schools, and lack of motivation, among many other supposed factors. The prevalent conditions of most classrooms in Nigeria's public schools are highly offensive and therefore run counter-productive for a meaningful and effective teaching and learning to take place. The situation in the classrooms is so appalling that many of the school children and their teachers have to share their classrooms (often without doors and windows) with goats, reptiles and birds (Moronkola, Adegbile and Moses, 2004).

In spite of these challenges, there is great expectation from the parents and the society at large, which has further imposed greater responsibility on the teacher who is perceived as the pillar upon which the success of the school rests. The role of the teacher is explicitly presented in the National Policy on Education (NPE) document (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The teacher, as an implementation agent, is expected to play his/her role in the achievement of the policy objectives. According to the policy document, the major pursuit of government towards the classroom teacher in Nigerian schools includes:

1. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
2. To encourage further spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
3. To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.
4. To provide (competent) teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the whole world.
5. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Undoubtedly, the teacher is the hub of any educational system and a major determinant of its success. Thus Ukeje (1996) in Ajayi (2004) stated that:

*Without an adequate number of inspiring well-informed teachers fully prepared to meet the responsibilities in our schools, we cannot have good education; and without good education, we cannot hope for long to meet successfully the challenges of a changing world.*

This has informed the need for adequate training and empowerment of the teacher with up-to-date knowledge, skills and methodologies in order to cope with the dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education market with a hope to raising their productivity.

The Table below describes the expectations and characteristics of the Nigerian teacher as presented by Babalola (2011).

**Table 1: Characteristics of a Professional Teacher in Nigeria**

S/No.	A Professional Teacher is:	Ideal Indicators	Reality as perceived by the author
1.	Conscientious	Careful, thorough, meticulous, painstaking, reliable, diligent, hard working, assiduous	Owing to economic and historical reasons, a Nigerian teacher is seemingly unmotivated, lackadaisical, anecdotal and lethargic about professional ethics
2.	Creative or critical	Original, imaginative, inspired, inventive, resourceful, ingenious, innovative	Based on the bureaucratic mode of training and practice, a Nigerian teacher is mostly traditional, uninspired and unimaginative. The teacher is expected to lead children to identify and solve problems and learn how to create knowledge
3.	Community related	Contextual, related and appropriate	Partly as a result of the theory-based training, a typical Nigerian teacher is mostly unconnected with the neighbourhood
4.	Competent	Knowledgeable, well-informed, skilled, experienced, expert, proficient in	Amateur in pedagogy

		courses in education, teaching subjects, general studies and teaching practice.	
5.	Committed	Dedicated, loyal, devoted, steadfast, unswerving, faithful	Partly because of the admission process that allows education to be a dumping ground for "cheaters", there are practicing teachers who are uninterested, unattached and 'apathetic' to the teaching profession.

Source: Adopted from Babalola, J.B. (2011). *Teacher Professionalism in a Time of Global Changes*

### Factors Militating against Effective Classroom Management

Several problems manifest in the typical classroom situation in Nigerian schools which have the capability to constrain a smooth teaching and learning process and ultimately school productivity. These factors are student-based, teacher-induced and of course school-generated problems. Successful classroom management may be difficult where some of these problems occur in the classroom. These problems include among others:

- Students' absenteeism
- Disobedience and general disrespect for constituted authority
- Fighting (verbal and physical)
- Noise making by students
- Noise from markets and garages located near schools
- Gas/smoke pollutions from the immediate environment
- Drug misuse/abuse
- Sleeping in the classroom
- Untidiness of the classroom environment
- Dilapidated buildings, lacking mental stimulating facilities that are characterized with low or no seating arrangement
- Failure to do assignment/homework



- Lack of concentration by the learner (day dreaming/mind-drifting)
- Poverty of the parents which has made education and learning impossible for children especially disabled children in the rural areas.
- Lack of cordial relationship between the teachers and the students
- Poor mastery of the subject taught or subject matter
- Lackadaisical attitude of teachers
- Poor or absence of both internal and external supervision of schools
- Use of inappropriate methods of instruction & instructional materials
- Inability to identify students' individual differences in terms of their interests, abilities and weaknesses
- Inability of teachers to stamp their authority in the classroom
- Inability to communicate effectively with the students
- Inadequate planning and preparation of lesson plans and lesson notes
- Overcrowded classrooms with a very high student-teacher ratio
- Poor school administration
- Harsh school environment, among others (Arogundade, 2009)

There is a long list of militating factors against the effective performance of the classroom teacher in a school situation. The need for the teacher to anticipate and circumvent these recurrent classroom problems is essential if his/her productivity is to be increased. Thus, for an enhanced productivity, a conscious teacher must have the prerequisite skills to effectively manage the classroom for a greater learning outcome.

### **Classroom Management for Improving Teachers' (School) Productivity**

According to Arogundade (2009), classroom management refers to some forms of arrangement and co-ordination that takes place in the classroom. It is a method or technique which the teacher adopts to ensure that every learner utilizes available resources with the sole aim

of achieving the goals of the school system towards learning (Tella, Ajayi and Olowoye, 1990; in Arogundade, 2009). More succinctly and explicitly put, Adewole and Tuoyo (1994) defined classroom management as the process whereby human and material resources are organized, students motivated and inspired and a conducive learning environment created to accomplish educational objectives.

Thus, judging from the various definitions, we can conclude that classroom management is the effective and efficient utilization of students and other learning resources available to the teacher to achieve an optimum level of the teaching and learning objectives. The major aims of classroom management among other reasons are to:

1. realize the school objectives
2. prevent wastages
3. enable students to achieve the highest level of their potentials
4. ensure optimum utilization of resources in the classroom
5. avoid time wasting
6. coordinate classroom activities
7. guide against unseen administrative problems (Atanda, 2009 & Arogundade, 2009).

### **Principles of Effective Classroom Management**

Having identified the objectives and need for classroom management by the teacher, the following principles were suggested by Atanda (2009) who advocated that for teachers to have an effective learning outcome in the classroom, they should:

- Exhibit self-discipline
- Establish rapport with students
- Devote enough time to plan class work
- Have the interest of students in mind
- Treat all students equally and with respect
- Have positive expectations of the students
- Be consistent in dealing with students and situations
- Locate source of good behaviour, misbehaviour and use appropriate punishment or reward wisely.

### **Strategies for Effective Classroom Management**

In view of the envisaged and inherent problems that militate against effective teaching and learning process in the classroom, the following strategies may be adopted by the teacher to improve productivity:

1. Ensure a hygienic and congenial physical classroom structure. For example, desks and tables should be properly arranged and the class made neat to enable free flow of information between the teacher and the students.
2. Have a good knowledge of the learners. The teacher should be able to know the strengths and weaknesses of the students. This will help the teacher on how best to assist such students and devise methods to apply in helping them or otherwise.
3. Have a good mastery of the subject matter. The teacher should know far more than the students in his/her subject area. This will enable the teacher to be in total control of the teaching-learning process.
4. Use appropriate and relevant learning materials according to the level of the students' mental development.
5. Use appropriate methods of instruction. The method used by the teacher should be one which stimulates learning, for example, that which can arouse the active involvement of the learners (students).
6. Provide appropriate and meaningful instructional materials
7. Ensure a proper management of employed instructional materials during the teaching-learning process.
8. Ensure the existence and observance of classroom rules and regulations.
9. Solve problems whenever necessary.
10. Ensure that teaching and learning is done under organized, planned, and fortified environment with teaching/learning instructional aids to stimulate students' sense of conception, perception and concentration to facilitate systematic understanding and acquisition of knowledge in them.

### **Conclusion**

The role of the classroom teacher as a catalyst for educational and subsequently national development cannot be over-emphasized. Nevertheless, the observed low productivity among teachers in public schools calls for a serious concern. A concerted effort is therefore needed to improve the performance of teachers in public schools for the benefit of the entire school system. One important means of achieving an increased productivity of teachers and have an increased learning outcome of students in schools is through an effective

classroom management. The classroom is the school theatre where the students are diagnosed and treated through the instrumentality of teaching. In order that we might have a rewarding learning outcome/quality in our schools, an appropriate environment for effective classroom management needs to be considered. Different classroom management strategies for improved teacher productivity in schools have been suggested. An adoption and extension of these strategies will go a long way in improving the productivity of teachers in schools and subsequently the achievement of the schooling objectives.

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