

## **TEACHER QUALITY IN THE ERA OF CRISIS IN QUALITY LEARNING**

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### **Introduction**

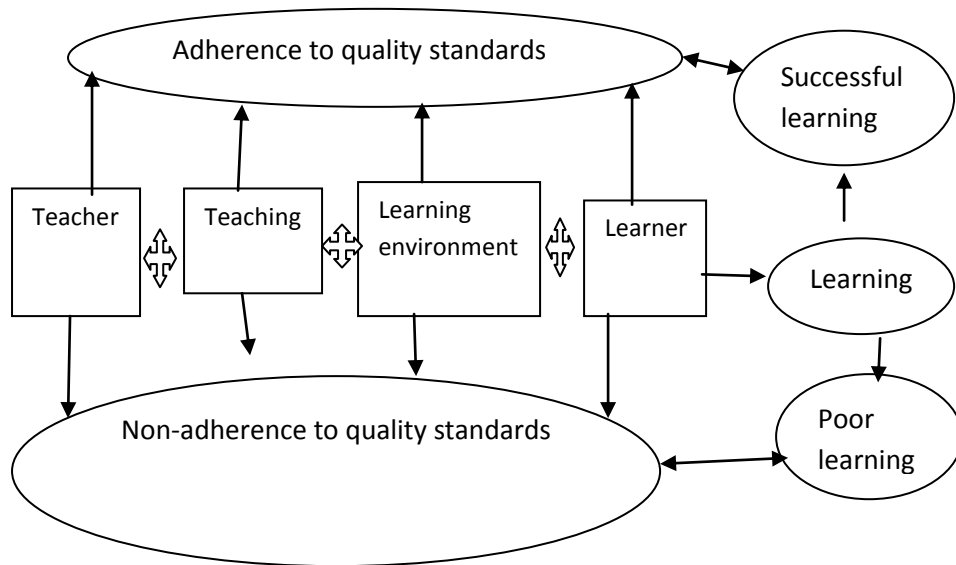
There is no gainsaying the fact that the entire spectrum of the educator sector is evidently crises ridden. For instance, some states (e.g. Plateau) at one time declared a state of emergency on education in the state. The ultimate goal of education which is learning cannot be exempted from crises that structured the process that delivered it. For instance, many basic education completed school leavers cannot read and write. These indicators of crises in education have led to the much discussed fall in the standard of education.

The writer therefore, commends the National Council of Education Psychologists for devoting its 2016 conference to discuss crises in education and to ponder on how best to tackle them frontally. Accordingly, this presenter keyed into the Council's concerns about the crises and veered his paper away from sustainable development to the crises and the place of the teacher in increasing or abating the crises. The central thrust of the paper therefore is that teachers are globally recognized as the kingpins of every education system. Their sum action or inaction in the classroom context makes the noticeable difference between successful learning and its failure of the school.

This discussion hinges on the four critical elements of the teaching and learning process, namely the teacher, teaching, learning environment and the learner. The issues in these elements as they positively or negatively lead to learning shall be discussed. Learning is the dependent variable while the four factors are the independent variables in the teaching learning process. In agro-terms, the quality seed yields quality fruits, the converse applies equally. The question of crises cannot be meaningfully discussed without considering the nature or quality of the processes that produce them. Symbolically, the discussion will be guided by the double 't' and triple 'l' formular where :

- t<sub>1</sub> - the teacher
- t<sub>2</sub> - teaching activity
- l<sub>1</sub> - learning environment
- l<sub>2</sub> - learner
- l<sub>3</sub> - learning

Graphically, the figure below present at a glance the window to the discussion.



The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively but in critical measure upon the quality of their education. The quality of their education depends more than upon any other single factor upon the quality of their teachers George (2013).

Teachers are globally recognized as the kingpins of every education system. This is presumably because they superintend the teaching-learning process for purposes of educating learners for the intrinsic values that education offers them. The key elements in this process are subject content/knowledge and the pedagogy of its transmission to the learner. If the knowledge is meaningfully impacted, learning is said to have taken place when measured by the teacher by whatever means, if otherwise it is assumed the teacher has not taught and is often held directly, or indirectly responsible for it. Teachers are of different qualities – effective and mediocre for instance. They are classified by training – trained and untrained (cheats). Governments the world over, are interested and invest in training effective / quality teachers because they are instruments to achieving student learning outcomes when all the factors in the teaching-learning exercise are accounted for.

Quality teachers are determined by certain laid down criteria which vary from one country to another. For instance, each country decides what is the minimum/basic academic qualification a teacher must earn. In Nigeria it is the Nigeria Certificate in Education. In the USA it is a bachelor’s degree. In addition, there are other criteria.

There is a state certification agency that issues certificate of registration which is renewable only after passing the mandatory examinations. In other climes such as Nigeria the certification is given only once for a life time. The quality of teachers from the two countries can never be the same. It is assumed that the teacher who sits for exams to renew certification has higher updated teaching expertise, profound content knowledge which has greater positive implications for the students' learning and achievement.

The expectation is rife that quality teachers will characteristically deliver quality teaching in the classroom. We must exercise caution here because the elements that yield a quality teacher are observable and measurable but do not in themselves guarantee quality teaching. They ought to work in concert with other non-objective measurable elements to build a wholistic teaching strategy that can make the difference in both teaching and learning processes and outcomes. These elements abound in the literature. Strong (2011) identifies the elements of qualification, personal / psychological qualities, pedagogical skills and practices and teacher demonstrated ability to raise student learning. KingRice (2003) mentioned teacher experience, teacher preparation and degrees, teacher certification, coursework and own test scores. Obanya (2014) includes qualities of love, gender sensitivity, emotional intelligence, being role models etc. Quality teaching results when state certification, pedagogical practices criteria mesh with teacher personality elements to bring about effective teaching that can make a difference in students' learning outcomes.

What is quality learning? It is difficult to define quality learning because it does not occur in isolation but is an effect of good teaching. Common sense dictate that improvement of teaching should be a key element in improving student learning. They also advise "let learning be the horse leading the teaching car, and not vice versa". It is the learning factor that drives the teaching-learning process; teaching is not an end in itself but a means to an end.

Fenstermacher and Richardson ( ) in their paper define factors that contribute to good learning which showed that good teaching is just but one of the four ingredients in the mix. The other three are (1) willingness and effort of the learner, (2) a social surround supportive of teaching and learning and (3) opportunity to teach and learn. These four factors instruct that every bit of the teaching-learning process must be purposefully active and mutually cooperative; if otherwise the end of education may be compromised leading to frustration of expectation.

With the above factors in place, quality learning is still far from being understood. UNESCO (2013) defined quality learning as  
 encompassing processes through which people acquire  
 the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills and attitudes  
 necessary to fully engage in their communities, express  
 their ideas and contribute positively to their societies.

If every education system can yield a reasonable percentage of quality learning, then the issue of learning crises now at a pandemic proportion especially in

developing economies would not be an issue for global discussion and intervention. Though EFA has made it possible for massive enrolment in basic education, UNESCO deposes that, that is the beginning of the process. The actual crises is experienced at the other end of the process (i.e. learning). For instance, UNESCO avers that about 250 million children cannot read, write and count well; children in millions leave school without the skills they need to thrive and other millions lack the most basic reading and writing skills. These failures only are a scratch of the magnitude of learning crises expressed in other forms as fall in standard of education, “bookish knowledge education”, certificate driven education and education that cannot impact the society on the part to development. UNESCO concludes that “good teachers are the key to the improvement and calls on governments to provide the best in the profession to those who need them most”.

The teacher has so far featured in every segment of the teaching learning process thus: (1) quality teacher, (2) quality teaching, (3) quality learning and is now being saddled with confronting head long the crises in quality learning. The wisdom of the Nigerian Council of Educational Psychologists to focus on crises on teacher quality and crises in learning should be seen as both patriotic and commendable. Serious efforts should be made to improve the teacher factor in the education enterprise for a better learning outcomes.

In this paper, the central theme is how the teacher can best be assisted to reduce the crises in the learning process. To this end the paper will attempt to understand who is a quality teacher in the country. Next will be an analysis of issues involved in quality teaching and learning as viable instruments for reducing crises in quality learning. The challenges facing the teaching profession generally and the teacher in particular shall be presented and the way to go to address them shall be used to round up the discussion.

### **Who is a Quality Teacher**

It is difficult to define who a quality teacher is. Part of the difficulty is how to operationalize the term “quality” which Strong (2011) admits is inherently value-laden. Another problem is that quality is a neutral term that is synonymous with great, effective, transformational. In this context, the elements that seem to characterize quality teachers shall be used to discuss who they are. There are three main elements among others that distinguish a qualified teacher from an unqualified teacher.

#### **1. Professional / academic qualification**

Each country determines the minimum entry professional / academic qualification a prospective teacher must earn. Here it is the Nigeria Certificate in Education which prepares teachers for the early childhood and basic education levels of teaching. It is a combination of teaching subject (single / double major) and education foundations including teaching practice. NCE is a form of higher education. Other acceptable entry qualifications come from the Universities, Polytechnics, Institutes of Education and recently the National Teachers Institute (Distance learning

system). The pattern of training in these other higher institution is similar to that of N C E : subject / Education / teaching practice. The inclusion of N.T.I. is primarily to upgrade Grade II teachers (who are already trained teachers to meet the minimum entry teacher qualification of N C E) and PGDE for non education graduates (to acquire teacher education qualification. It does appear that the quantum of educational content is higher in the NCE programme cohort following the NCCE digitization of the minimum standard in education, micro-teaching and teaching practice.) Of the three types of professional teachers i.e. N C E, B. Ed. and PGDE, it does appear that N C E has a deeper exposure to education content, and teaching practice.

**2. Registration**

The earning of NCE, B. Ed or PGDE certificate is a pre-requisite to the second criterion of being a quality teacher which is registration and admittance into the teaching profession by the TRCN established in 1993. The Council's major mandates are the regulation and control of the teaching profession at all levels. Despite its challenges, the Council helps in the process of establishing who is a quality teacher.

**3. Teacher demonstration of subject area competence**

Teacher demonstration of subject teaching competence is not required as a condition for professional certification in Nigeria much as is done in other professional bodies. The demonstration of competence ends with teaching practice and is not updated thereafter. The lacuna is a serious setback in the professionalization of teaching in Nigeria and this gap is filled up by introducing teacher mandatory update training and testing, the teaching profession will continually lag behind other professional bodies globally.

Ozoji (2015) concludes that a quality teacher is one (1) who has certification in the core subject area, (2) has educational foundation experiences to understand the teaching practice and is finally registered by TRCN.

**Issues in Quality Teaching and Learning**

The popular cliché<sup>7</sup> that a hood does not make a monk is analogous to the fact that being a quality teacher does not in here in the teacher the capacity to deliver quality teaching, to achieve quality learning or even to address the crises in quality learning. It is a simplistic assumption to believe that quality teachers are magicians. Teaching is a complex art, the entire system involving the teacher, the learner and the classroom must be assessed, equipped and rendered functional before expecting quality learning from their networked implementation.

This discussion hinges on the fact that quality learning is the dependent variable of the independent variables of the teacher, and the learning environment. To this extent, it is critical to clarify what makes quality learning. The elements involved in it will serve as a beacon to help channel efforts towards its achievement. Obanya's (2016) "manifestations of quality learning" is instructive here because of its

breadth and width of components of quality learning: cognitive learning, life coping skills and lifelong / life wide learning skills.

**Table I: Manifestations of quality learning**

Cognitive Learning	Life-coping skills	Lifelong Learning Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Critical/Analytical/Logical thinking-reasoning</li> <li>•Communicative competence in language</li> <li>•broad general knowledge</li> <li>•conceptual prowess</li> <li>•quantitative/graphical literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Intra-personal awareness</li> <li>•inter-personal propensity</li> <li>•street/social sense</li> <li>•positive self-concept</li> <li>•ICT versatility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•spirit of enquiry</li> <li>•propensity for knowledge-information search</li> <li>•capacity for self-directed learning</li> <li>•burning thirst for continuous self-improvement</li> </ul>

The issues in teaching-learning process that will help to achieve the above quality learning indices are briefly discussed here.

**1. Teacher Competence**

The teacher must have a thorough knowledge of the subject to be taught. Teacher competence, intellectual mastery of the subject, practical application of classroom learning to meet outside classroom realities, the quest for knowledge exploration in the present day information overflow awash in the internet count in quality learning. Various levels of subject knowledge have been identified – “deep knowledge (enables giving extended explanation of complex issues); deep understanding (enables students connect what they see with what it means for them); problematic knowledge (enables problem solving), higher other knowledge and meta language” (ir public.cli.det.nsw.edu.). There is no doubt that a teacher with these levels of understanding will impact learners more meaningfully for better subject understanding expression and application in beyond classroom contexts.

With the calibre of teacher educators in higher education and the quality of students they teach, it is doubtful if the above levels of content knowledge can be achieved by our teachers. For instance, researches indicate that teachers skip some topics in the school curriculum because of their conceptual difficulties. Some of the topics are poorly taught which is evident in the way students answer questions in internal and external examinations. Since one cannot give what one does not have, pre-service teachers must be thoroughly taught to be able to teach others well.

**2. Cognitive learning is not enough**

It does appear that too much emphasis in education is placed on cognitive content and learning in order to pass public examinations well. This emphasis is good but is of very limited value in the society. Obanya’s elements / components of learning touch on life-coping and lifelong learning skills. These other non-cognitive learnings are critical to successful living in

the society and therefore should be given adequate attention by teachers. A school leaver who scored very well in the cognitive content (examination) but is deficient in life-coping and lifelong learning skills cannot be said to have quality learning. Teacher reference to these skills and their reward among students who express them, modeling people who succeed in exemplary demonstration of the skills can go along way to instill them in students. Teacher-Counsellors and parent involvement in encouraging the value of these skills in students can be helpful as well.

**3. Personal / Psychological experiences**

Good teaching goes beyond teacher deep content understanding. Teacher personal qualities (such as friendly inter-personal skills) are also important in ensuring that the knowledge conveyed has a human angle. Strong (2011) mentioned such qualities as love of children, honesty, compassion, fairness. These qualities endear students to the teacher, generate love for him/her and dispose them to pay more than ordinary attention in class. The classroom climate becomes humane, genial and friendly that make teaching and learning most probable to be productive. A teacher with unapproachable personality does more harm to the formation of students already lays the faulty foundation for the children to keep aloof in class and therefore, loose interest in learning.

**4. Pedagogical skills and practice**

The crest of the teaching profession is the science of pedagogy. Boundless.com (2016) deposes that “in-order to be an effective teacher one must study the science of pedagogy and instructional design”. Of all the elements of teacher characteristics, pedagogical skills and practices are the most fundamental and clearly sets the qualified teacher apart from cheats. The principle of “one shoe fit all sizes” in teaching demonstrates lack of professionalism because all subjects must not be taught the same way.

**5. Classroom Management and Organization**

Learners come to school with a wide range of behaviours some of which will disrupt the class routine. Part of the professionalism of the teacher is how to deal with much behaviours before they derail the lesson. Alber (2015) suggested five quick classroom management tips for novice teachers. These include use a normal / natural voice; speak only when the students are quiet and ready; use hand signals and other non-verbal communication in the face of classroom disruption etc. Teacher Vision (2015) suggested meeting the child and describe in exact terms the behaviour you find unacceptable in the classroom among others. The place of corporal punishment in schools is debatable. However, teacher use of foul language vituperation by teachers is very harmful to the psyche of students.

**6. Planning for Instruction**

An instruction that is not well planned is not worth delivery. At best it is a disservice to the teaching profession. Learners may learn wrong concepts that stays, the teacher fumbles in the process. Planning involves determining

the lesson objectives, task analysis, pedagogic considerations including the learning materials, evaluation and assignments. A well planned lesson, all things being equal is most probable to be well delivered and better understood.

**7. Inclusive Teaching and Learning**

Children with disabilities, nomadic children, disadvantaged children, internally displaced children, HIV/AIDS orphans, children from extreme poor families all have rights to basic education and should have unfettered access to it. Their education is mandated by national (e.g. Federal Ministry of Education, 2013) and international conventions (e.g. Salamanca 1994) to be obtained in the mainstream of education. Worldwide, the era of secluded education (special school) is phasing out, all children including those listed above and others should be taught in the regular school by the special teacher co-teaching with the regular teacher. This is a big challenge to the professional teacher to bring about quality learning for all of them.

The principle of universal design for learning (UDL) ensures that learners with different learning styles are taught and helped to learn just like any other learner in the school. Regular teachers may not be competent enough to teach all these classes of learners. This makes a very strong case for recruitment of special teachers to co-teach such children.

**8. Role models for integrity (Obanya 2016)**

Good teachers should be role models for their learners. Obanya (2016) mentioned areas of such modeling : integrity, morality, work habit. Others may include decorum, proper conduct, grooming to inspire others for the future. Quality teachers are role models. They directly and indirectly teach life coping and life long skills necessary for a survival in the society.

**9. Key emotional intelligence (Obanya 2016)**

Quality teachers should be able to display emotional intelligence as integral aspect of their teacher personality. Obanya (2016) mentioned such traits as self-concepts, patience, temperance, empathy etc.

In summary, the nine traits among many others discussed here are seen as interlocked rather than discrete and should be seen as such. When they are dutifully engaged in the schools, all things being equal, quality learning will be harvested and the crises in the teaching-learning process will be drastically reduced.

**10. Best practices moderated teaching**

Quality teachers are expected to teach using more often than not the best practices in the teaching enterprise. These practices according to search software quality : teachtarget.com refer to techniques or methodologies that through experience and research have proven to reliably lead to a desired result. A success bound teacher is concerned with best practices in the classroom because their careful implementation increases the level of quality learning in the learners. The search software identified four salient practices as (1) teaching a balanced curriculum, teaching an integrated curriculum,

differentiating instruction to meet individual needs and providing active learning opportunities for students to internalize learning.

### **Challenges in Realizing Quality Teaching And Learning**

Challenges facing production and engagement of quality teachers are not different from the challenges facing the entire education in the country. These have been thoroughly discussed in the literature that every discussant feels called upon to discuss them.

The challenges shall be presented in two spheres: those that relate directly to quality teacher and learning and those that relate to the entire education system. This separatism in discussion is only tenuous and for academic purposes alone. In reality they all fuse to reduce the effort at providing quality teachers for quality learning.

#### **Phase A Challenges**

##### **1. Poor pre-service intake**

It is common knowledge that about 90% of pre-service teachers chose education as an afterthought after missing their dream courses. The question of quality teachers is compromised right from the beginning.

Colleges of Education introduced pre-NCE program as a survival strategy in the face of dwindling applications and intakes from JAMB. Entry requirement is lowered for such students.

The NTI involvement in teacher education has further watered down entry requirement and quality of graduates it produces. Most of the teachers in the basic schools who cannot read or pass tests set for primary school children are alleged to be products of NTE.

Put together poor seeds are continually sowed in teacher education, what is to be harvested is going to be no better than the quality of parent seed stock. The entire school majorly is filled with incompetent teachers. This is sad and unfortunate.

##### **2. Limited Teacher Renewal Experience**

There are little or no mandatory opportunities provided for teacher renewal experience for teachers to improve on their level of teaching. Many teachers stop reading after graduation. This is not the practice with other professional disciplines such as medicine and engineering. TRCN lacks the powers that Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Council of Regulation of Engineering (COREN) have to compel their professionals to take regulated update courses and testings as a means for professional growth.

##### **3. Unfriendly teaching learning environment**

Many of the nation's primary schools are below standards in most indices of quality assurance. Basic text books are lacking, classes hold under tree shades, many children sit on bare floor while many of the schools look dilapidated. The contribution of friendly school environment to quality teaching and learning is lost.

**4. Inadequate recruitment policy and retention**

The principles of square peg in a square hole according to Ozoji (2015) appear not to apply in teacher recruitment, deployment and teaching in one's professional area of competence.

Recruitment for choice schools / locations rather than need, for political reward, for corrupt practices is wide spread and largely contributes to the dwindling quality / standard of education in the country.

There are serious teacher shortages at all levels of education. Jegede (2015) said about 19 million teachers will be needed in classrooms by 2020 to achieve the UBE target in Africa. The figure will rise to 3.2 million by 2030. One fall out of these short falls is that teachers are grafted to teach subjects they did not study. The damage to quality teaching and learning is colossal.

**5. Ill-motivated teacher force**

Teacher motivation is not limited to welfare, though it is very vital to keep best teachers and fight brain drain. The converse of teacher motivation is adequate tools of engagement. Frustration is high when teachers go for months without salary and when they do not have tools to their work.

**Phase B Challenges**

1. Inadequate funding. Obanya draws the distinction between investing and spending in education
2. Poor societal perception of teacher education
3. Lack of commitment among teachers due to motivation breeches
4. Problem of attrition in teaching (brain drain). There is top flight of brain-drains out of the teaching profession. Quacks rush are taken to replace them
5. Unethical behavior of some teachers
6. Systematic corruption in the system
7. A disconnect between educational researches that roll out effectiveness of nouvelle pedagogies (such as concept mapping) and the culture of less productive ones in the schools such as 'talk and chalk'.
8. Low-rating of teaching profession manifested in lower admission rate into Faculties and Colleges of Education (Okebukola, Obanya).
9. Pervasive notion that only academic dregs make up the bulk of teachers both in-service and practicing.
10. Quality of teachers, their level of motivation are too low to support education in a global economy (Okpala, 2014), nor education for knowledge economy (Ozoji 2015).
11. Dissatisfaction with present teacher output in schools leading to calls to return to Teacher Grade Two Colleges (Okebukola, Ishaku, 2016, Akindutire and Ekuridayo, (2012).
12. There has been steady decline in social recognition of teachers – a problem related to more pervasive value-crises in society (Obanya, 2014).
13. As a result, teaching has ceased to be a first-choice profession (Obanya, 2014).

14. The nation is practically teaching without teachers as the system is plagued by ill-motivated teachers (Obanya, 2014).
15. A relatively satisfactory teacher – pupil ratio has not translated into effective learning outcomes (Obanya, 2014).
16. Classroom teaching has remained largely of the talk and chalk type (Obanya, 2016).

### **The Way Forward**

1. Adequate teacher education training with adequate provision of resources, quality assurance in terms of class-size, number of teacher and instructional materials
2. Adequate budgetary provision (cf UNESCO minimum of 26% of national budget to education)
3. Provision of child friendly and teacher friendly school environment
4. Special salary for teachers
5. Teacher renewal experience every four years
6. Make teaching more attractive, pay competitive wages, improve teachers status and their working conditions
7. Quality teachers determined by effective output not by qualification (certificates)
8. Continuous mandatory training
9. Institution of best practices in teaching
10. Ethical issues promotion

### **Conclusion**

The discussion of teacher quality, teaching and learning in this paper does not raise hopes that the present situation will change for the better either now or in the foreseeable future. Reforms are needed to tackle frontally the hydra-headed challenges facing the education system in general and teacher education / profession in particular.

The connect among quality teacher, quality teaching, quality learning is to be strengthened in order to fight the crises in the education system. The challenges that frustrate the achievement of quality learning and ending crises in it were discussed. The way to go to achieve the goal of quality learning was suggested. With Incheon 2030 declaration this discussion ends.

We shall ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well re-structured efficient and effectively governed systems.

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