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RE-ENGINEERING EDUCATION THROUGH TEACHERS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

The paper focused on re-engineering of our educational system against the backdrop of the general disenchantment, distrust and hostility for a system that in already loosing its quality. The paper took a cursory look at the teacher as a critical factor in qualitative education delivery and as the fulcrum of the education process. It also examines the concept of re-engineering and the need for teachers' development and capacity enhancement. The paper concluded by asserting that no meaningful re-engineering can take place if teacher's development is not given consideration.

The effectiveness of an organization, be it manufacturing or service oriented, governmental, quasi-governmental, private or Educational Institutions, is measured by one objective criterion of standard; namely, the quality of its products or services. The quality of its products or services is to a large extent a function of the Caliber of the Man –Power component of the organization or Establishment. It is only when the man-power is adequately qualified for the job to be performed that the material resources input can be effectively deployed and utilized in the most optimal manner. The quality of the educational service depends on the quality of the teachers. Researches on teacher education development show that the most fundamental characteristics of high quality basic education, is that it leads to good student learning (Leu, 2004). Good student learning is made up of several elusive and highly complex construct; quality of education quality of learning and by inference, quality of teaching. Quality of education which leads to good student learning is widely thought to be made of a variety of inter-locking factors of which the most important is good quality of teacher and teaching (Boyle, While And Boyle, 2003; USAID, 2002 and Tatto 2000).

The Teacher as the Fulcrum of the Educative Process and National Development.

The Strategic importance of the teacher in the educative process and in nation building can hardly be over flogged. Any nation that is serious about national development must pay special attention to the education of the teacher more than that of any other profession (Ukeje 1996). It is the teacher that can lay a foundation for national development because on the teacher depends the ultimate realization of the aims of education, and in the process of social change and in nation building; the teacher is the "builder of the builders". The training of teachers is therefore imperative in our efforts towards national development.

What is implied is that the journey to national development starts in the classroom with effective, dedicated and competent teachers. Ukeje (1996:7). Succinctly puts it this way.

Compared with the other professions, the mistakes of the teacher, and therefore defective teacher education programmes are more devastating not only to the individual but also to the entire nation than, the mistakes of a member of any other profession. For instance, if a doctor makes a mistake, patient may die, if an engineer makes a mistake, a bridge may collapse and if a lawyer makes a mistake, somebody may lose his liberty, but if a teacher makes a mistake, generations yet unborn may suffer.

This is to say that the mistake of the teacher have multiplying effects and can affect posterity. This assertion is further affirmed by professor Jack Allen of the George Peabody College for Teachers, U.S.A. as quoted by Ukeje (1996:2).

One of the prime functions of the school indeed the chief function is to provide a setting within which boys and girls can grow intellectually. This can only be accomplished through the learners association with information, knowledge and facts. Books can help, so can laboratories so can numerous other types of learning materials. But always there stand the

teacher always on the stage, often front and centre. What he knows can make a difference, what he does not know can be an irreparable loss.

These quotations above have been deliberately highlighted to give impetus to the argument on the indispensability of the teacher in the educative process. Okafor (1988) asserts the importance of the teacher in nation building when he wrote that America built her greatness in the classroom.

The Context of Re-Engineering and the Need for Capacity Development.

Re-engineering as an emerging Concept is the examination, study and eventual modification of the existing internal mechanism or functionality of an existing system in order to make it more effective, efficient, responsive and providing demonstrable value for the system and all stake holders. Several elements have come together in recent time that have created the environment for the re-engineering of our educational system through human capacity development and prompted the necessity for a new approach to teacher support and development especially in developing countries like Nigeria. These include:-

1. Changes in educational policies that have led to changes in school structures, curriculum and instructional methods in use in Nigeria schools. As a result, teachers and school administrators are constantly faced with the problem of managing a new structure different from the one in use in their pre-service training. Further more, these changing structure and curricular coupled with the changing educational policies make new demands on teachers and school administrators.
2. The changing patterns of teachers' in-service education in response to the need for improved teacher quality in the context of rapid educational expansion and changing goals (USAID, 2002).
3. The growing consensus that professional development yield the best results when it is long-term, school-based, collaborative, involving all teachers, focused on students' learning, linked to the curriculum and used as a matter of central importance teachers own knowledge of their practice and the realities of their classrooms and schools (Hiebert and Stigley, 2002).
4. The new approach is also fundamentally related to the pervading reforms and present challenges in our educational system where emphasis is now on teachers who are reflective practitioners with sufficient subject matter knowledge and a lot of practical approaches to the act of teaching/learning (Boyle, While and Boyle, 2003).
5. The move from students' learning which emphasizes students knowing cannons of fixed knowledge as the basis of learning and relatively de-emphasizing issues of perspective, critique, different ways of knowing and creation of knowledge, to a new dynamic approach which assumes that students know and understand in unique ways and create their 'own' and 'new' knowledge by interacting with both the external knowledge base and his or her knowledge base and the environment. That is, the use of higher order thinking skills, problem solving, communication and other active-learning approach to mobilize information and develop knowledge through discovery and analysis.
6. Career long on-going teacher professional support and development now viewed as a continuum and necessary tool to improve teachers quality and therefore educational quality.
7. Growing realization of the central role of teacher quality in improving overall educational quality.
8. Rapid expansion of students' enrolment in requiring much larger number of teachers and the necessity of finding ways to support relatively inexperienced or unqualified teachers.
9. Declining quality as a consequence of rapidly expanding quantity of education in the absence of sufficient-resource.
10. The glaring facts that existing public educational undertaking have far exceeded the financial resources which government can make or willing to make available for education and the willingness of voluntary agencies to invest in teacher quality.

Ways of Re-Engineering Education through Human Capacity Enhancement

Reforms have been introduced over the last decades on a totally new way of teaching and learning. These reforms include an increased emphasis on active-learning, student-focused, critical thinking and problem solving approaches. The entire teaching force, including existing and new teachers, must understand and be prepared to implement these new approaches in their classrooms. Within this context, stakeholders in education are finding effective and cost effective ways of encouraging teachers to (i) understand the meaning of reforms (ii) know the subject matter they teach (iii) engage students in a range of appropriate new learning experiences and (iv) work with professionalism and high morale. These have become priorities for many governments. In response to these pervading reforms and challenges in education, many countries are shifting to school-based and cluster in-service programmes, as the primary means of professional support and enhancement for both updating and upgrading members of the existing teaching force. (Leu, 2004).

School-Based and Cluster In-Service Teachers Professional Development

School-based and cluster in-service Teachers Professional Development programmes have become wide spread and popular in recent years in both industrialized nations. This attraction stems from the growing consensus that professional development yields the best results when it is school-based, collaborative, long-term, actively involving all teachers and used as a matter of central importance teachers own knowledge of their practice and the realities of their classrooms and schools (Hiebert and Stigley, 2002). The school-based and cluster in-service teachers professional support programme is a school initiative geared towards helping each teacher facilitate change in the classroom through co-operative and collaborative approach (UBE, 2003). It is a staff development strategy which provides a bridge-stone with other teachers and school administrators to help solve problems and support each other through discussions, modeling, coaching and involvement with other aspects of school and educational change (Okokoyo, 2006). It is a capacity building and professional development approach of a continuous on the job collaborative support and guidance for the purpose of updating and upgrading new knowledge, skills and competences for increased efficiency on the job which will eventually rub on the quality of students output. The two main recent approaches to school-based in-service teacher development are the teacher mentoring and the cluster teacher programmes.

Conclusion

There is a general disenchantment, disillusionment, distrust and hostility for an educational system that in already losing its quality as identified by the non-performance of some of her products. There is therefore the need to examine and modify the internal mechanism and functionality of our education system in other to make it more effective, efficient, responsive and provide value for our society and stakeholders. Since the teacher is a critical factor in qualitative education delivery, it is therefore imperative that the success of any re-engineering process must take into cognizance the professional capacity development and enhancement of teachers.

Recommendation

It is recommended that for any meaningful re-engineering of education, teachers capacity development and enhancement is imperative. This can be achieved through teacher in-service training or education

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