

THE ESSENTIALS TOOLS FOR REBRANDING THE NIGERIAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

**MARY P. HAGGAI
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
UNIVERSITY OF JOS**

The paper examined the image of the Nigerian teacher and the teaching profession. Existing literature show that teachers and the teaching profession in the country have poor public image and low status. The factors contributing to this poor image and low status were discussed. These include inadequate knowledge of the subject matter, ineffective pedagogic and administrative practices, negative attitude, unethical professional behavior, poor teacher/pupil relationship, and poor relationship with the family and community. The paper called for rebranding to recover the teachers' and teaching profession's lost glory and to project a better image. Among the tools discussed as essential for the rebranding are the processes of recruitment, review of teacher training program, the establishment of professional and ethical standards, the mass media, information technology as well as the effective monitoring and evaluation of teachers.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious from everyday encounter that the brand name "Nigerian Teacher" is repulsive to the Nigerian public, unlike in the past when it was a prestigious symbol. Mention the name 'Teacher' anywhere at any forum in this country and you will get an exact idea of the image the Nigerian teacher carries in this country. The problem is further demonstrated by the kind of attitude towards studying education in the university and securing teaching appointment. Very few students choose to read education as a course and the space for admission in the faculty of Education is filled after other faculties have selected the best and most qualified candidates that the remnants are damped into the faculty. The first choice for courses and faculties into the University of Jos for 2008/2009 and 2010/2011 sessions portray the poor image of the teaching profession in Nigeria, as seen in Table 1. Likewise applicants seeking employment usually take teaching appointment as the last resort sometimes including people who studied education at the university.

Table 1. First Choice Courses for University of Jos.

Faculty	2008/2009 Session		2010/2011 Session	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Arts and Humanities	2304	11.36%	1899	10.42%
Education	265	1.31%	342	1.88%
Law	1945	9.59%	1742	9.56%
Medical Science	4816	23.75%	3902	21.42%
Natural Science	1877	9.25%	1860	10.21%
Social Science	7146	35.24%	6909	37.93%
Environmental Science	629	3.11%	670	3.68%
Pharmaceutical Science	1274	6.28%	892	4.50%
Total	20256		18216	

The attitude towards the teacher and the teaching profession only underscore the fact that the Nigerian teacher has lost credibility and the urgent need for rebranding. The Nigerian teacher need reorientation, retraining and repositioning to upgrade him/her to a status, that is a new brand name that will makes him/her attract the patronage of national and international employers of labour in the education sector.

BRANDING THE NIGERIAN TEACHER

Branding is more or less a concept of commerce and it refers to the process of identifying a product with a manufacturer. The process can involve advertising, use of symbols, distinctive designs and other means of making customers associate a specific product with a specific manufacturer. In a competitive market, manufacturers devise means of identifying their products as a means of attracting customers. For example in the textile industry, there are brand names like Nichem Wax, SP Wax and UAC Wax while in the drug industry there are such brand names as Mayer & Baker, GlaxoSmithCline and Pfizer. When you pick a product with a brand name or symbol, you have some assurance of the quality of the product you are carrying because of the brand.

Nworah (2009) observed that branding has been adapted by countries or regions to sell the image of their nations to the rest of the world in order to promote their international profile attract foreign investment and make the place ideal destination for tourism and trade. Nigeria's image project renamed 'The Heart of Africa Project' in July 2004 is an attempt to project the country to the outside world of the potentials of and opportunities that abound in the country for investment, tourism and trade. In February 2009, the minister of information Professor Dora Akunyili launched a re-branding of Nigeria Project. This is sequel to Nigeria's reputation as one of the most corrupt nations of the world, coupled with other socio-political issues such as fraudulent practices, electoral malpractices, poor infrastructure, maladministration, inadequate funding of education and health, as well as increased cases of kidnapping, religious and ethnic crises in the nation. These issues give the nation a negative international image which calls for re-branding.

Teachers and the teaching profession in Nigeria have very poor image and low status among Nigerians themselves. The prestige and dignity accorded the teaching profession in pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria suddenly eroded with the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1976 when sudden exponential growth brought unqualified teachers to the classroom coupled with the continuous negligence of teachers' welfare and low remuneration.

The image audit of teachers shows that the Nigerian teachers in various parts of the world who are academicians and intellectuals are reputable throughout the world (Nworah, 2007). However, the image of the Nigerian teacher at home shows low status, low morale and lack of interest (Izevigie, 2006).

Izevigie (2006) found that teachers in Nigeria are perceived as stingy, inferior, always complaining, shabbily dressed and asserting their rights or projecting their professional image when necessary. In addition, he found that Nigerian teachers have poor work ethics. Lamenting the poor image of the Nigerian teacher, Emeagwali (2004) observed crisis of confidence in the teacher as employers have to retrain graduates to make them usable; parents have to provide extra coaching for their children and employers have preference for Nigerians trained abroad.

REBRANDING THE NIGERIAN TEACHER

The negative public image of the Nigerian teacher calls for re-branding. He/she needs rebranding to provide quality education. Rebranding Nigerian teachers will reposition them to be effective teachers whose pedagogic skills, subject mastery, relationship with students make them most attractive to employers in the education market. Repositioning teachers to provide quality education means new attitudes, positive perceptions of the teaching profession, effective pedagogic skills, in-depth knowledge of subject matter, imbibing high work ethics and standards, and adequate knowledge of children.

ASPECTS THAT NEED REBRANDING IN THE NIGERIAN TEACHER

Knowledge of the subject matter. In order to teach, the teacher has to be an expert in the subject he teaches. However, the situation in Nigeria is that we often find people teaching subjects that they did not study in the University or College of Education. Many teachers teach subjects related to their field of specialization. For example someone who studied engineering teaches Physics or Mathematics, or someone who studied History or Social Studies teaching English Language. Such teachers rely heavily on textbooks for preparing and teaching the subjects. What is urgently required now is the training of teachers in institutions of Teacher Education in specific subject areas as subject specialist or expertise in the various subjects taught at the secondary school. This is necessary to make teachers subject-matter experts with training background that inculcates methods, techniques, instructional materials and assessment strategies adequate for that discipline.

Subject-matter teaching makes teachers well able to integrate various content areas into coherent lessons and to efficiently organize students' time instead of the text-book style of teaching.

Pedagogic and administrative practices. Teachers' pedagogical and administrative practices need to fit the new paradigm. In spite of global shift in teaching pedagogy from text-book direct teaching to more interactive technology based methods, Nigerian teachers are still glued to the text-book, lecture, note-taking methods which are suicidal to lifelong education and the cultivation of high-level thinking skills such as analytical, creative, practical thinking and problem-solving skills. Methods that yield the highest form of lifelong learning in students include teacher-directed instruction with learning activities, problem-based learning and thinking, interactive instruction, integrated approach, project method, technology-based approach, collaborative/team teaching, contingent teaching, and a constructivist approach.

Teachers' attitude. A survey of teachers showed that no teacher was satisfied with teaching and 86% look forward to leave the teaching job (Haggai & Bahago 2003). This attitude reflected in the commitment of teachers to their job. This type of attitude also alienates teachers from their students and do not significantly enrich, direct or change the lives of the students.

Professional behaviour. Teachers need to cultivate professional behavior in their job. They should have specific set of values, paramount among which is commitment, professional ethics, which should take care of relationship with students, interest in improving practices and mentoring.

Lifelong learning attitude. Teachers need continuous education in both learning-teaching process and the subject matter taught through in-service workshops and conferences and higher degrees (masters), where teachers update and expand their knowledge and skills on aspects that enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Knowledge of student. To teach effectively, the teacher has to understand the child. He gets this understanding from the knowledge of child development characteristics and learning styles of the students he or she teaches. The knowledge shapes the relationship that exists between the teacher and the student. Apart from developmental characteristics, the teacher needs knowledge of students, family, cultural and experiential background so that he or she can relate with them based on mutual understanding and respect.

Relating to family and community. It has now been realized that teachers need to work closely with families and the community for the education of the child. Therefore, teachers need to acquire skills on how to work with families and the community for the proper training of children. This will include scheduling time for parents to visit and interact with their child and teacher, visit to homes, identifying areas of community and family involvement in learning and not just projects. Browne and Gordon (2009) state that children are best understood and supported in the context of their family, culture and communities.

Research. It has now been found that teachers cannot perform their work well without research, particularly action research (Rathus, 2008). Teachers who interact with student everyday should study certain learning behaviours in their students and report their findings in forums such as seminars, conferences and workshops. Effective teachers are also researchers.

The bottom-line of the aspects of Nigerian teachers that need rebranding is disposition which Browne and Gordon (2009) see as the values, commitment and professional ethics that influences students, families, colleagues and communities. A teacher's disposition affects student learning, motivation, development as well as the educator's own professional growth.

TOOLS FOR REBRANDING THE NIGERIAN TEACHER

Tools are instruments or means used to get work done. The means through which this nation can get the task of rebranding teachers to make them a brand name attractive to employers in the education industry anywhere in the world include the following.

RECRUITMENT/SELECTION

The greatest problem with the teaching profession in Nigeria is that everyone who needs a job is given teaching appointment irrespective of his disposition and interest in teaching. On the issue of recruitment, Wejagsinda (2006) caution that "Teacher's hold the power to either distort, pervert or warp the minds of the young or set them up on the path of self-actualization." Therefore, at the point of recruitment, we should ensure only applicants that possess inner motivation and passion for teaching and love for students are employed as teachers. He or she must know that teaching work is important and that he or she is going to affect the young people and their learning. Applicants must demonstrate that they are passionate about teaching and show strong persistent interest in the way children grow and develop. The subject of human growth and development is exciting to them. Someone who loves teaching has a disposition for wanting to express their love for teaching and children. Recruit a teacher who will be interested in the total welfare of students and regard them as persons or human beings with dignity and potentials which he or she must nurture.

One evidence of ascertaining whether one who intends to be a teacher is interested in teaching and love children is that his or her present or previous involvement in children's groups, children camps, sports, exploration and outdoor activities. The teacher should also maintain some close relations with children. In addition, the person should be allowed to interact freely with students at games or write essay on children.

TRAINING

Knowledge of subject matter, pedagogic skills and understanding students can be acquired through training, upgrading, experience and observation of good teachers. The teacher training programmes in Nigerian Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education need to be overhauled immediately to make them more effective in training pre-service teachers. Teacher training institutions should maintain a close link with educational level/schools they are training teachers to serve. This ensures a connection between what happens in real life of the classroom and the teacher training institutions.

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For example, teachers in training at the university level should learn methods of teaching various topics using the themes in the curriculum of secondary school students. This will enable them to learn the content, methods, instructional materials and assessment of content they will be teaching. There is need for retraining of teachers in Nigeria to cultivate the love for teaching and students as well as emphasize commitment and update pedagogical skills.

FUNDS

The woes that have befallen education in this country have been attributed to poor funding, particularly the low remuneration and poor welfare package for teachers. Nigeria has not been able to achieve UNESCO 26% allocation of federal budget to Education, therefore, teachers are unmotivated, leading to low morale. Poor funding in this nation explains the incessant strike action by teachers at all levels in this country. Parents, teachers and students and all stakeholders must press towards increased financial rewards and better working conditions for teachers.

POLICY AND TEACHER EDUCATION

The National Policy on Education has provisions for training of teachers at the Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education. The problem is that teachers in these institutions who should implement the policy are under-motivated and infrastructure inadequate for the proper training of teachers. In the training institutions, field experience, mentoring and teaching practice should be vigorously and firmly pursued.

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF TEACHING

The association of primary school teachers, Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), and the association of secondary school teachers should have a set of professional guidelines and code of conduct that expresses the values and beliefs of those who teach. The standard should include components of the work, teacher conduct, quality action and training (licensing), dressing, code, relationship with students, document assessment, teaching and learning climate, teacher/student ratio, and teachers' responsibilities to students, families and the community.

Professional and ethical standards can also be given by teachers' professional associations like Mathematics Association of Nigeria (MAN), Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN), and Association of Social Studies Teachers and Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN). Constant monitoring and evaluation of teachers effectiveness in teaching, scholarship and service is required by authorities of primary and secondary schools to ensure high quality job performance.

THE MASS MEDIA

Public and commercial mass media comprising of the news papers, magazines, television. Radio and the internet should embark on the rigorous promotion of the image of teachers and the teaching profession. This can be done through advertisements, programs and documentaries that portray the value of teachers and the crucial role they play in molding the young ones. Adverts, essays and promotions with catching titles like "Be a Teacher, be a Hero", "Tribute to my Teacher", "A Nation that Neglects Teacher is a

Nation Drifting Towards its Doom” and “My Teacher, my Angel” should be aired to attract the most talented youth to the teaching profession and get them committed.

Multi-nationals and national corporations should also initiate awards programs that recognizes excellence among teachers, for example, “The Bournvita Teacher of the Year Award”.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

In this information technology age, teachers must put their souls and hearts in acquiring ICT skills as this will greatly transform their teaching skills and making learning enjoyable. Emeagwali (2007) emphasized that schools should invest in training and staff development to enable teachers use technology instead of being overwhelmed by it. With the large population in Nigerian classes, ICT is the only viable option for supporting and encouraging life-long learning. Teachers have to acquire ICT skills as this will transform education through enrichment of content, facilitating student initiative learning, motivating and increasing the desire to learn, and actively producing effective teaching and learning aids.

CONCLUSION

The attitude of Nigerians towards the teacher and the teaching profession generally show negative attitude as everyone particularly young applicants seeking admission to universities tend to despise education. The attitude might have been formed an encounter with teachers who do not demonstrate professional competence and professional behavior in their job performance. The paper has explained the factors that have contributed to the poor image and low status of teachers in the Nigerian society. The paper then suggested essential tools that will sharpen and position the Nigerian teacher at the primary and secondary school level for higher and more effective job performance so that he or can have a better public image and status.

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