

The Effectiveness of Teachers in Finland: Lessons for the Nigerian Teachers

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Abstract

The article reviewed the effectiveness of teachers in both Finland and Nigeria with the aim of drawing lessons for Nigerian teachers. The paper observed that many Nigerian teachers are not effective in teaching due to reasons peculiar to both our economic and political conditions. In contrast, the teachers in Finland are effective due to the type of training they received, recruitment method, and teachers' welfare. There are lessons Nigerian teachers could draw from the Finland teachers' effectiveness as identified by this paper. These are the establishment of teachers' universities with secondary schools for assessing teachers in training; good welfare in term of better pay; thorough assessment of teacher pedagogy and written interview base on content knowledge before employment.

Keywords

Effectiveness, Teacher, Assessment, Motivation, Content Knowledge

1. Introduction

The effective teacher was defined by Darling-Hammond (2010) as one who is intellectually challenging and motivating students to learn. Anderson (2004) viewed effective teachers as those teachers who achieved the goals set for themselves or goals set for them by others like the Ministry of Education. Thus, an effective teacher should have the knowledge, and the skill requires to achieve the goals (self-goals or others goals) and be able to use the knowledge and skill appropriately (Anderson, 2004). However, teacher effectiveness is difficult to define since there has not been a consensus agreement on what measured quality teacher (Stronge, Ward, Grant, 2011).

Stronge, Ward, Grant (2011) identified four dimensions that were used to characterize an effective teacher as follows:

- Instructional effectiveness
- Uses of assessment for student learning
- Positive learning environment and
- Personal quality of the teacher

An effective teacher should be able to use a different type of teaching method and know when and how to change from one method to another in a lesson (Stronge, Ward, Grant, 2011). An effective teaching should not only be a concern with

students' academic goals but should be a concern with students' personal goals. Students are from different background, and they have come to the class with different mind apart from academic which an effective teacher should take note. An effective teacher should always maximize instructional time and make good use of it (Stronge, Ward, Grant, 2011).

An effective teacher must have a high expectation of learning. A teacher who has a low expectation of his or her student about learning a concept would not care if at the end of the teaching students do not understand the concept. If, on the other hand, the teacher had aimed high on the students understanding of a concept, but at the end of the lesson students do not understand the concept. He or she will be moved to seek for the cause and possibly teach the concept again until there is an improvement in understanding.

The effective teacher makes use of different type of technologies in his or her classroom (Aina, 2013a). Nguyen, Williams, and Nguyen, (2012) cited that there are many applications of technologies in teaching and learning depending on the knowledge of the user. The use of technologies is important for all effective teachers in schools today. Aina (2013b) observed that there are many experiments very difficult to carry out in the laboratory due to its nature,

such experiment could be simulated. Effective teachers do not ignore complex concepts or topics in the curriculum, but rather he or she will do everything possible as an effective teacher to make such concept meaningful to the students.

Assessment and feedback are crucial to students learning. Aina and Adedo (2013) observed that feedback is essential in teaching and learning because it improves student learning. Every effective teacher should know how, when and the type of assessment and feedback needed in his or her lesson. We have different types of assessment. Whichever form it might take, assessment activities take much time of the teachers and have an important place both in teachers and students' lives (Ceyhum and Erodogan, 2013).

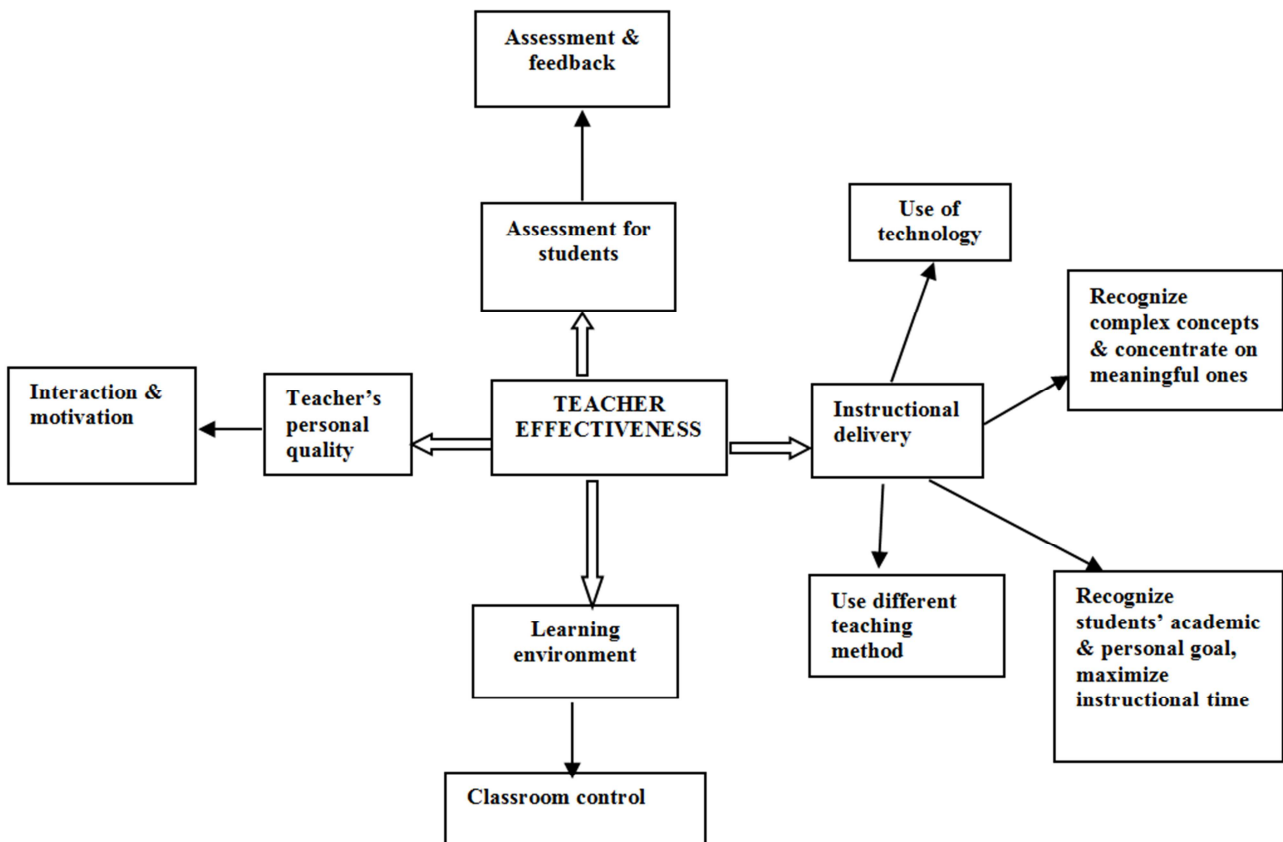
Maintaining a positive environment for learning is the responsibility of an effective teacher. It is easy to distinguish between a teacher who is effective and the one who is not effective by the way they manage their classroom. Managing classroom very well for effective learning is the responsibility of an effective teacher. The ability of teachers to organize classrooms and manage the behavior of their students is central to achieving good educational outcomes. Oliver, and Reschly (2007) affirmed that effective teaching requires among other things basic management skill that include understanding of the nature of the classroom. Berliner was cited by Oliver and Reschly (2007) that teachers who have problems in classroom discipline are frequently ineffective in the classroom.

Teacher personal quality is an important teacher

qualification that plays a very crucial role in a teacher effectiveness (Aina, Olanipekun and Garuba, 2015). This is a qualification a teacher developed as he or she progresses in the teaching profession. It is not certificated in schools. For instance, no school issue certificate for a teacher for interaction between teachers and students. It is a personal quality that each teacher should develop to make him or her effective. Another component of personal teacher quality is motivation. Effective teacher developed his or herself to be able to motivate the student to study and learn very well.

An effective teacher will always interact well with students both within and outside the classroom because this is critical to students learning. Interaction between the teacher and student in school is paramount and effective teachers should ensure maximum interaction that will enhance learning in the classroom. Aina (2013b) faulted the lack of adequate interaction between teacher and student as one of the reasons physics students do not perform well academically. Interest and achievement of students lie within the teacher and students interaction/relationship in a given subject (Onah and Ugwu, 2010). Creating classroom environments that promote positive cultures with healthy interactions can motivate students to learn and their educational goals (Nugent, 2009). A good teacher-student relationship may be even more valuable for students with behavior and learning challenges (Caballero, 2010).

The figure 1 below gives a conceptual framework of teacher effectiveness in school.



Source: Aina et al. (2015)

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Motivation can act as a catalyst for many physics students who have lost interest in the course. Loss of interest may be because of the abstract nature of the subject (Adeyemo, 2010; Aina, 2013a) or because of teachers strategies of teaching (Wambugu, Changeiywo, and Ndiritu, 2013). Where motivation is lacking because of teachers' ineffectiveness, the result is always not good. (Adeyinka, Asabi, and Adedotun, 2013) noted with concern that, the negative performance of students toward educational aims and objectives could be associated with the teacher's low motivation.

Content knowledge is imperative and a serious factor to be considered for any effective teacher. It is what a teacher knows he/she will teach students. Obodo (2009) said if teachers are not sound in the content of what he or she teaches such teachers might not be effective. Xu and Özek (2012) underscored the importance of effective teachers while pointing out that, moving effective teachers to disadvantaged schools could potentially raise student performance in those schools.

2. Effectiveness of Finnish Teachers

Teachers enjoy great respect in Finland (Sahlberg, 2010; Simola, 2005) and Kansanem (2005). The effectiveness of Finnish teacher had given them recognition and success in international comparative assessment (Sahlberg, 2012; Simola, 2005).

Teachers' education in Finland is different from others in the world, and that is the secret of success of her educational system (Sahlberg, 2012).

Those who want to be classroom teachers study education as their major subject while those who prefer to be subject teachers applied to faculties of their respective subject. According to Sahlberg (2012), there is no alternative to receiving teacher diploma in Finland it is only the university degree that grant a license to teach. The teacher education is aimed at balancing teacher personal and professional competencies (Sahlberg, 2012).

Attention is on how to build pedagogical thinking skills to enable teachers manage the teaching process by contemporary educational knowledge and practice (Westbury, Hansen, Kansanen, and Björkvist, 2005). The general core of Finnish teacher education is represented by pedagogical studies (Kansanem, 2005). The content knowledge for pedagogy is sufficiently broad so that teachers can guide the development of their pupils as extensively as possible. Master degree is the minimum qualification a teacher can have in Finland before he or she can teach in Finnish school except the kindergarten (Sahlberg, 2012; Kansanem, 2005) and Simola, 2005).

After graduating from a university, students are licensed as teachers and may apply for teaching positions in schools. It is not enough to complete high school and pass a matriculation examination, but excellent interpersonal skills are required (Sahlberg, 2012). Becoming a teacher is an exercise that is extremely rigorous and prestigious in Finland (Faridi, 2014). According to Kansanem (2005) and Sahlberg (2012),

selection of classroom teachers and subject teachers is by matriculation examination, accumulated school marks, examination on assigned book of pedagogy, observation of social interaction and communication skills and finally personal interview for the individual who want to be a teacher. Finnish teachers with Master's degree have the right to participate in postgraduate studies to supplement their professional development. This is an advantage for many teachers to pursue their doctoral studies in education while they are simultaneously teaching in school (Sahlberg, 2012).

Finnish teachers formally work in the classroom teaching, preparation for class and two hours in a week to plan school work with their co-teachers. Finnish teachers' work is devoted to the improvement of classroom practice, the school as a whole and work with the community (Sahlberg, 2012).

Teacher's Welfare is paramount in Finland. According to Sahlberg (2012), teachers earn very close to the national average salary level, typically equivalent to what mid-career middle-school teachers earn annually in the OECD nations. Teachers appeared satisfied and valued in Finland (Faridi, 2014).

Teachers in Finland enjoy some professional freedom and opportunities to influence their work and school developments (Aho, Pitkänen and Sahlberg, 2006). Teachers decide their teaching methods; the teaching material used; drawing up of local curricula and participating in joint decision making (Finnish National Board of Education, n.d).

Young people go into teaching, not because of good salary but because of high social prestige and professional autonomy. Finnish teachers apparently enjoy the trust of the general public and also of the political elite that is not very common in many countries (Simola, 2005). The effectiveness seen in Finnish teacher would not have been possible if not for how Finnish teachers were trained. There is no doubt, self-efficacy of the Finnish teacher must be very high. Study shows that pedagogical training has an effect on teacher self-efficacy (Nevgi, Postreff, and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2004). Confirming this Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi (2004) posited that the more pedagogical training the teachers had, the higher they scored on the self-efficacy scale.

3. Nigerian Educational System

Nigerian educational system is not stable due to an unstable political system of the country. Education policy in Nigeria is not stable: different government comes with difference education policy. Adelowokan and Makinde (2010) attributed poor standard of teacher education in Nigeria to the instability of the government policy. However, for more than a decade now, the pattern of Nigerian education system and certificates obtainable in Nigerian schools are illustrated by the figure 2 and table 1 below.

From the figure 2, student who graduated from Senior Secondary School can seek admission to the university directly. Alternatively, can go through polytechnic or college of education and go to the university later.

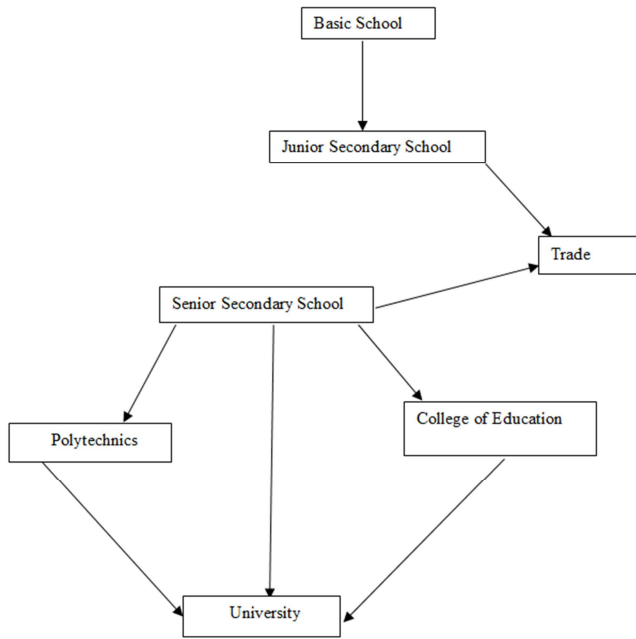


Figure 2. Nigerian Educational Pattern.

Table 1. Major certificates obtainable in Nigerian schools and duration.

s/n	Certificate	Duration
1	Basic school	6years
2	Junior secondary school	3years
3	Senior secondary school	6yrs
4	Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE)	Minimum 3years
5	Diploma	Minimum 2years
6	Bachelor degree	Minimum 3years
7	Master degree	Minimum 2years
8	Doctoral degree	Minimum 3years

Those who failed Junior Secondary School exam and those who cannot proceed to tertiary are free to learn a trade or craft. The Nigerian educational system has been critiqued by scholars and educators for many reasons. One of these reasons is that the curriculum is defective. Odia and Ommofonmwan (2007) observed that Nigerian education needs a total overhauling and restructuring to improve the performance of higher education in the country.

4. Effectiveness of Teachers in Nigeria

The education system of any country cannot rise above the quality of the teachers. There is low rating of teachers in Nigeria due to inadequate manpower in her educational system as a result of lack of qualified teachers (Adeoti, 2012). Lack of professional qualification for some teachers is one reason for not being effective. A professor in Adeoti (2012) was worried that, most graduate teachers are not professionals and are inadequately exposed to teaching practice while many of them cannot communicate effectively in English. One of the qualities of an effective teacher is verbal communication as opined by Darling-Hammond (2010). Communication skill is one of the conditions for recruitment into the teaching

profession in Finland and that make their teachers effective in teaching (Sahlberg, 2010). An effective teacher should be adequate in the use of English language because according to Aina, Ogunde, and Olanipekun, (2013) English is Nigerian language of instruction in the classroom.

In Nigeria, many are not applying for teaching in the universities and colleges of education because it is a most relegated profession (Adeoti, 2012). He further said in the year 2011 more than 1,300,000 applicants applied for university admissions in Nigeria, less than 5% of this figure applied for courses in Education. This shows a lack of interest in teaching profession (Ibikun, 2004; Aina, Ogunde, and Olanipekun, 2013) and Adeoti, (2012).

There is a lack of recognition, motivation in term of salary and other incentive, and nobody wants to be a teacher. No new qualified teacher want to teach, the old ones are leaving the profession for a better job (Aina, Ogunde, and Olanipekun, 2013; Ibidapo-obe, 2004; Adeoti, 2012; Akindutire, and. Ekundayo, 2012). The entry qualifications of the majority of pre-service teachers are very low (Adeoti, 2012) as against very high qualifications standard of Finnish teachers. A university don in Adeoti (2012) was lamenting that many universities and colleges of education were using outdated curriculum; many teachers are still teaching with the teaching method they learned many years ago.

The submission of Inuwa and Yusuf, (2012) was that the general condition of Nigeria public secondary school is bad, and teaching and learning are operating at the lower ebb. These authors concluded that teachers are left with no alternative than to work in a poor condition leading to ineffectiveness in service.

Teaching is a profession, not highly esteem in Nigeria that public has accorded low status and recognition. No one is proud to identify or introduce himself/herself as a teacher (Legatt, 1970; Afe, 2002). In order to achieve any socio-political, economic and scientific development in a country, qualified teachers who are equipped with the desired knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, and who are empowered to perform their tasks professionally are important (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012).

Many teachers lacked teaching experience. They teach science in abstraction, lacked adequate knowledge of subject matter and the competence to deliver (Abdullahi, 2007). Similar to this is the submission of Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) that teacher training institutions in Nigeria are guilty of producing teachers that are inadequate in terms of knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical skills.

According to Adelowokan and Makinde (2010), the following institutions are saddled with the responsibility of training professional teachers in Nigeria:

- Colleges of Educations
- Faculties of Education
- Institutes of Education
- National Teachers Institute
- School of Education in Polytechnics
- National Institutes for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN)
- National Mathematical Centre

In view of the aforementioned challenges, it is very clear that Nigeria teachers are far from being effective and the few ones that would have been effective were rendered ineffective because of excess workload and inadequate working conditions (Mmadeke, 2006).

5. Important Lessons from Finnish Teachers

Nigerian government should give quality education to teachers as done in Finland. The idea of establishing many colleges of education and training teachers in almost all universities with the low standard is not good. Let there be special universities for teachers education that will be research based. The core of this teachers' education should be on sound pedagogical and content knowledge.

Each university should establish a secondary school as done in Finland where student teachers could be assessed every week as against 12 weeks of teaching practice. The method of 12 weeks teaching practice exercise in most Nigerian teachers training institutions does not give room for thorough assessment (Aina, 2014). This is the reason most Nigerian teachers cannot be effective even when they claimed to have adequate content knowledge.

The Nigerian government should make the welfare of Nigerian teachers paramount as done in Finland. Teachers should be respected and valued. The same type of professional freedom given to teachers in Finland should be paid to Nigerian teachers too. If teachers in Nigeria are well paid like medical doctors, oil workers and bankers this will make the profession prestigious and well valued.

Nigerian may not start teaching with a master degree, but recruitment of teacher should be based on the sound assessment as done in Finland. Recruitment to teaching should not be for those who have lost hope in other fields and make teaching the last option. Recruitment to teaching should be more rigorous than that of banking because teacher deals with human lives.

The government should make everything teachers' needs for their effectiveness available including a conducive avenue for professional development as done in Finland. Teachers in Finland can obtain his or her doctoral degree without necessarily resigning from teaching. Nigerian government should emulate this and allow both primary and secondary school teachers develop themselves to doctoral level with full financial support.

Very recently, the Finnish education system is witnessing a significant change in the students teaching, even though the Finland's education system is considered a model for the rest of the world (Klein, 2015). The reason is to provide the students with the necessary skills for a more technological and global society. However, there are criticisms from some teachers as regard these changes. For instance, a change in making students involves in planning lesson was seen as a threat and wrong way to improve teaching and learning.

The Nigeria government should equally consider making

changes in the teaching pedagogy. The change should not only be on paper but should be enforced and supported with the necessary materials to effect the change. The change in the Finnish education also is emphasizing on collaboration learning. Collaboration is an essential element of authentic learning which should be the focus of student learning at all level of education. Aina and Langenhoven (2015) has advocated for a paradigm shift in teaching method in Nigerian schools that would promote students collaboration in learning.

6. Conclusion

Nigerian teachers are very intelligent and hardworking but because of some conditions peculiar to Nigerian they are not effective as other developed countries of the world. In conclusion, there are many more lessons aside those mentioned above that could be of benefits to Nigerian teachers and other developing countries. The article, therefore, recommends as a way forward in our present educational system for Nigerian government to learn from the Finnish teachers' effectiveness as highlighted above.

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