

## Employment of untrained graduate teachers in schools: The Nigeria case

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### Abstract

Solving the unemployment problem by employing graduates who are not trained as teachers to teach in Nigerian schools and the likely problem is the focus of the article. The article highlighted the problems and importance of qualified teachers in any educational system. It was identified that untrained graduates teachers in the classroom create more problem than the one intended to solve. The article beams its searchlight on four areas where untrained teachers could have a problem that may badly affect the nation. These areas are self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), out-of-field teaching and professional focus. Four components of professional focus were highlighted as no distraction, professional development, interpersonal relationship and punctuality. The article was concluded with some recommendations.

**Keywords:** unemployment, self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), out-of-field teaching and professional focus.

### Introduction

Unemployment is a crucial problem in Nigeria that needs the attention of a serious government. According to Dalhatu and Bagaji (2014), unemployment is a threat to the development of Nigeria as a country. Shadare and Tunde (2012) lamented the high rate of unemployment among young graduates in Nigeria and concluded that it is a serious challenge to the nation. Asaju, Arome and Anyio (2014) quoted the World Bank to put the unemployment rate in Nigeria at 22 percent as at the year 2014. The present administration in Nigeria is making job provision for the unemployed youths one of its agenda. However, the recent pronouncement by the Federal Government of Nigeria that 500,000 unemployed youths will be employed to teach in Nigerian schools (primary and secondary) is not in the right step. Since the time of this pronouncement by the government many experts in the education sector have been criticizing the idea because of its adverse effects on the Nigerian education system.

This article is in line with others experts in education who have condemned the idea of employing the untrained graduate

teachers to teach in Nigerian schools. Nevertheless, this article is focusing some areas aside those already criticized. This is not the first time the Nigeria education will suffer a setback because of the wrong government policy. Several education summits had been held with no tangible result because the government failed to make use of the right personnel.

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government has no regards for the teachers and teacher education neither do the society has respect for the teachers also.

There is a lack of recognition, motivation regarding salary and other incentive and nobody want to be a teacher; no new qualified teacher want to teach again, the old ones are going away (Durosaro, 2006; Ibidapo-Obe, 2007; Adeoti, 2012; Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012). The resultant effect of this is a lack of commitment and ineffectiveness of the teachers (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012).

### **The Problem and Importance of Qualified Teachers**

According to Afe (2006), the National Policy on Education (NPE) has failed to achieve its objectives. This author observed that the teacher education programmes have been deficient in providing teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assessment in the nation. Teaching is a profession, not highly esteem in Nigeria. The public has no respect for teachers; no one is proud to identify or introduce himself/herself as a teacher (Afe, 2006). There is the dire need for qualified teachers in Nigeria who are equipped with the desired knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, and who are empowered to perform their tasks professionally (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012).

One of the major problems of the Nigeria educational system today is the production of qualified teachers to teach in Nigerian schools in sufficient numbers (Ibidapo-Obe, 2007). Many teachers lacked teaching experience; teach science in abstraction, lacked adequate knowledge of subject matter and the competence to deliver (Abdullahi, 2007). Odia and Omonfonmwan (2007) was of the view that teacher training institutions in Nigeria produce teachers that are inadequate regarding knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical skills.

The quality of teachers in any educational system determines to a great extent the quality of the system itself. Aina and Olanipekun (2015) submitted that qualified teachers are crucial to the success of

any educational system and the success of any nation in general. Professional teachers, in particular, are essential to the formulation and successful implementation of education policies in any country (Okoye, Momoh, Aigbomian, and Okecha, 2008).

Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, and Wyckoff, (2008) asserted that the most valuable educational resource is the teacher. Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007); Rockoff (2004) were of the strong believed that a teacher has significant impacts on students achievement. For Okemakinde, Adewuyi and Alabi (2014), to achieve the set national objectives teachers have an important role to enable the students to play their roles in the society. The quality of any educational system depends to a great extent on the quality of teachers in terms of academic and professional qualifications, experience, competency and the level of dedication to their primary functions (Oluremi, 2013, p.423). Teachers are the facilitators who are to impact on students the concepts expected to be learned (Owolabi, 2012). Teachers are the most important factor in the effectiveness of schools and the quality of a child's education (Akinsolu, 2010).

Qualified teachers are paramount, but they are not adequate in most schools. This has generated a serious problem in our educational system in Nigeria. One of the problems generated is the recruitment of graduates from different fields to schools. Most of these graduates are not professional teachers and, therefore, causing more problems rather the solving our educational problems.

At this juncture, this article will shed light on four critical areas where the recruitment of untrained teacher to teach is a serious issue with the system. The Nigerian populace is crying that students' academic performance at all level is worrisome. Reasons for this might not be far from the education constructs to be considered in this article. These are self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), out-of-field teaching and professional focus.

Teacher quality encompasses many aspects, including skills, knowledge, attitudes, dispositions and values (Curtis,

2015). Developed countries of the world are continuously demanding for quality teachers: such country like the United States (Bales, 2015). What makes a quality teacher are some of the education constructs to be discussed in the article.

### **Teacher Self –Efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy is the beliefs a teacher has about his perceived capability in undertaking certain teaching tasks. It is the belief a teacher has about his or her ability to accomplish a particular teaching task (Lunenburg, 2011). Teachers' self –efficacy is the set of beliefs a teacher holds regarding his or her abilities and competencies to teach and influence student behaviour and achievement regardless of outside influences or obstacle (Steele, 2010).

Teachers with a high level of teacher self-efficacy are more resilient in their teaching and likely to persist for a difficult time to help all students reach their academic potential (Pendergast, Garvis and Keogh 2011). Bangs and Frost (2012) argued that a teacher with strong beliefs in his or her efficacy will be resilient, able to solve problems and, most importantly, learn from their experience.

Self –efficacy affects teachers' level of efforts and persistence when learning difficult tasks (Lunenburg, 2011). According to Bandura, (1993), a teacher who does not trust his or her efficacy will try to avoid dealing with academic problems and instead turn his or her effort inward to relieve his or her emotional distress. Teachers with high efficacy perceptions persisted with low-achieving students and used better teaching strategies that allowed such students to learn more effectively. On the hand, teachers with low self-efficacy spent more time on non-academic tasks and used less effective teaching strategies that hindered student learning (Sharma, Loreman and Forlin, 2011, p. 13).

Teachers' self- efficacy has proved to be powerfully related to meaningful educational outcomes such as students' achievement (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). Low teacher self-efficacy leads to low academic achievement (Dimopoulou, 2012).

Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) observed that teacher' beliefs about themselves and their capabilities can be influential in the quality of their performance. Teachers' self –efficacy has been consistently associated with students' academic achievement (Holden, Groulx, Bloom and Weinburgh, 2011). Teacher self-efficacy is central to effective teaching (Steele, 2010).

### **Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)**

PCK according to Falk (2011) was first introduced as the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching by Shulman. Shulman (1987) considered PCK as a special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is specially the province of teachers, their special form of professional understanding. PCK is a characteristic of teacher knowledge of how subject matter should be taught (Koh, Chai, and Tsait, 2010). Similarly, Park (2014) viewed PCK as a professional knowledge for teachers. PCK embodied a unique form of teacher professional knowledge (Koh, Chai, and Tsait, 2010). PCK is specifically for professional teachers because it guides the teachers' actions when dealing with subject matter in the classroom (Van Driel, De Jong and Verloop, 2000). It is a particular body of knowledge of teacher required to perform successfully teaching within complex and varied context (Park and Oliver, 2007).

PCK is the knowledge that teachers develop over time, and through experience, about how to teach particular content including ways to enhance student understanding (Koehler, 2011). According to Koehler (2011), PCK is a particular expertise with individual idiosyncrasies and significant differences that are influenced by (at least) the teaching context, content, and experience. PCK stands out as different and distinct from knowledge of pedagogy or knowledge of content alone. Pedagogical content knowledge is a form of practical knowledge that is used by teachers to guide their actions in highly contextualized classroom settings (Koehler, 2011).

PCK according to Nuangchalern (2012) is the ability to combine knowledge of a particular discipline along with the teaching

of that discipline. He further stressed the need for the teacher to be able to blend content knowledge with the pedagogical. Schneider and Plasman (2011) underscored the importance of PCK to teaching and learning as a construct to help our thinking about what teachers continue to learn as they study their teaching practice. This implies that untrained teacher would not possess adequate PCK. PCK is considered by Carter (1990) to be knowledge of teaching that is domain specific; it is making what teachers know about their subject matter known to the students.

Five components of PCK was identified by Park and Oliver (2007) as knowledge of students'

thinking about science, science curriculum, science-specific instructional strategies, assessment of students' science learning and orientations of teaching science. These components are unique to a trained teacher, especially the instructional strategy and the assessment of students. Trained teachers know what type instructional strategy is adequate for a lesson; a trained teacher knows when the students are to be assessed and the type of assessment required. Beyer and Devis (2011) viewed these components imperative because they work together to help teachers represent specific subject matter in ways that make it comprehensible to students.

Bozkurt and Kaya (2008) see PCK as the knowledge base required for teaching. The authors contended, these are subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, the knowledge of learning difficulties of the students and the knowledge of instructional strategies and activities. One cannot discuss too much about the importance of PCK in teacher education as Van Driel, Verloop and de Vos (1997) said PCK is a knowledge base for teaching. The author believed that PCK was not just the knowledge of subject matter but the understanding of learning difficulties and student conceptions also. Given this submission, it is fundamentally wrong to allow anybody who was not trained as a teacher to teach. They may have real knowledge of the subject but understanding the process of learning is germane (Aina, 2013).

No matter how brilliant a teacher may

be, the moment he or she could not interpret the subject-matter knowledge to facilitate student learning he or she has not achieved anything. Therefore, PCK is referring to as teachers' interpretations and transformation of knowledge of subject matter to facilitate student learning (Driel, Verloop and de Vos, 1997). PCK is a heuristic for teacher knowledge that can be useful in changing the complexities of what teachers know about teaching and how it changes over broad spans of time (Schneider and Plasman, 2011).

Assessment is vital to teaching and learning, based on this fact Falk (2011) observed that PCK is a valuable resource for teachers engaging in formative assessment. PCK is not only important in the classroom but helps teachers to do best professionally. Teachers' content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge alone does not contribute to their professional development (Nuangchalern, 2012) unless the two merged.

Melo, Canada, Mellado and Buitrago (2013) explains that PCK is specific to how each particular subject is taught and is a form of reasoning and educational action using which teachers transform the subject matter into representations that are comprehensible to the students. PCK distinguishes between a trained teacher, and the untrained one who teaches a subject he/she had no adequately training. This leads to another serious issue in Nigeria education system called out-of-field teaching.

### **Out-of-field Teacher**

These are teachers assigned to teach subjects for which they have not got adequate training and qualification (Ingersoll, 2002). Du Plessis (2013) defines an out-of-field teacher as a teacher teaching out of their field of qualification, this field might be a specific subject or year level. Out-of-field teaching is a problem of poorly prepared teachers (Ingersoll, 2003). Interestingly, out-of-field teaching is not a Nigeria problem alone; it happens even in developed countries like U.S, Australia and even in South Africa. Du Plessis, Carroll and Gillies (2014) cited that 16% and 30% of science teachers in Australia and South Africa respectively are not qualified.

In Nigeria it is a common practice to

see a qualified teacher teaching a subject he/she was never trained for, at that point such teacher becomes unqualified. De Plessis (2013) supports this by referring to the concept of out-of-field teaching that, qualified teachers becomes unqualified by assigning them to teach subjects or year groups for which they lacked suitable qualifications. Du Plessis et al. (2014) opinion was that out-of-field teachers are still in the process of developing, and they are less suited to teach subjects they had no qualification. This infers that employing any graduate aside those who studied education to the teacher is not proper.

Out-of-field teaching has been suggested to be indicative of a teacher's inadequate subject-matter knowledge, and inadequate subject-matter knowledge has been found to be a critical factor lowering the

standard of quality teaching (Darling-Hammond and Ball 1997). Out-of-field teaching is a problem to our educational system, and most of the problems caused by this phenomenon are great that we may not be able to quantify. Some of the most important consequences of out-of-field teaching are, however, probably those not easily quantified (Ingersoll, 1999, p.29). There are many consequences of out-of- teaching as highlighted by Ingersoll (1999). Some of these consequences as pointed out by the author are:

- Decrease in preparation time for teaching;
- Decrease in time for teaching; and
- Decrease in teacher morale and commitment

The assignment of teachers to teach fields in which they have no training could change the allocation of their preparation time across all of their courses. They may decrease the time supposed to use for other courses in a way to prepare for the one(s) for which they have no background. Out-of-field teacher whose efforts are concentrated on subject content which is new to him has less time to focus on understanding students' needs and interests (Salleh and Darmawan, 2013). Out-of-field teachers have low self-esteem; they feel they do not meet the requirements or expectations (De Plessis, Gillies, and Carroll, 2013). There are requirements for qualified

teachers and what the society is expecting from every qualified classroom teacher which is students' achievement gains. Hobbs (2013, p. 274) asserted that out-of-field teaching can compromise 'teaching competence' and can disrupt a teacher's identity, self-efficacy, and well-being.

McConney and Price (2009: 89) said the employment of under-qualified teachers is one of the major contributors to the relative underachievement of students. McConney et al. (2009) made it clear that out- of-field teaching is a factor that contributes to stress for teachers. In any educational system where out-of- field teaching is found it will be difficult to know the reality of paucity of qualified teachers (McConney et al., 2009).

Hobbs (2012) observed that shortage of teachers in science has led to an increase in the number of teachers teaching outside their subject areas. The author said this had an influence on the quality of educational outcomes and the teacher well-being. Out-of-field teachers are often not confident to take risks in unfamiliar subjects or year levels because they feel exposed in unfamiliar subject territories (Du Plessis et al. 2014).

These teachers may not have the knowledge of the subject matter as well as the skill to teach this subject because they are not qualified. Hobbs (2012) view was that out-of-teacher lacked knowledge and pedagogical skills. De Plessis et al. (2013) contended that out-of-field teacher is insecure because of lack of pedagogical knowledge and are not suitably qualified for a subject. By this submission, it is fundamentally wrong to allow any untrained teacher to teach in any of the Nigerian primary and secondary schools.

The negative effect of out-of-field teaching is on the teacher themselves as Du Plessis et al. (2013) examined that out-of-field teaching influences teachers' development opportunities. These authors argued further that anything that restricts professional development of the teachers is also restricting educational development. Out-of-field teachers do not have the sound knowledge base from which they can approach their teaching (Du Plessis et al. 2013, p. 95). Aina and Olanipekun (2015) argued that Out- of-field teaching is not good

for our educational system because it affects both students and teachers professional development. Therefore, the next consideration in this article is the professional focus.

### **Professional Focus**

Nigeria with its burgeoning population is a country yearning for national development yet not serious with education. This is apparent with the way the government handles education issue in all levels of the governance. There is no regard for the teaching profession. On this basis everyone in this profession has no focus for the job: he or she used the occupation as a stepping stone to a more cherished one. Aina, Olanipekun, and Garuba (2015) had once said the professional focus is the hallmark of teacher effectiveness. These authors, therefore, identified four variables of teacher professional focus that is germane to the effectiveness of anyone who should teach in Nigerian schools. The variables are discussed below.

**Lack of distraction.** To be professionally focused, an individual must not be distracted by a chosen job. A medical doctor who is working in a hospital in Nigeria will never be distracted by seeking for neither the job of an engineer nor that of the teacher. However, where one employs an engineer to teach or a nurse: they will always be distracted because they do not have the focus of a teacher. They will always leave their job not done in search of their profession. The innocent students will always be at the receiving end. For a teacher to be professionally focused is to be fully committed to teaching without distraction to any other profession. There are instances in Nigeria where some teachers brought goods and items for sale into the classroom. Every available opportunity they have and sometimes create one to market their products and abandoned their job.

**Professional development.** It is conscious and systematic steps to ensure teachers upgrading and continuous self-improvement (Oluremi, 2013). Professional development is critical for the retention and

improvement of any teacher in the classroom (American Association of Physics Teachers, 2009, p.22). Professional development is an aspect of teachers' qualifications that is paramount for an effective classroom teacher. Oluremi (2013) said professional development enhances and improve teachers teaching skills. This author posited that there was the need to foster teacher's continuous professional development to cope effectively to improve the quality of education. Teachers' continuous professional development is highly relevant both to improving educational performance and effectiveness and for enhancing teachers' commitment, identity and job satisfaction (European Commission, 2013).

Those who are charged with the responsibility of teaching should always attend conference, seminar and workshop to develop their teaching skills. It has been observed that most of those who are not professional teachers do not show a positive attitude to such professional programme. However, they are very active in programmes relating to their field of studies. These people erroneously thought being a teacher is to have adequate knowledge of the subject only. Therefore, they lack focus for teaching.

What happens when a teacher lack focus on teaching as a result of inadequate professional development? Agharuwhe (2013) provides the answer that professional development is positively related to students' achievement. Students' achievement will be negatively impacted. Professional development helps practicing teachers to upgrade their content knowledge and teaching skills to adjust to the introduction of new curricula, new research finding on teaching and learning (Agharuwhe, 2013).

**Interpersonal relationship.** the relationship between the school and the host community is vital to comprehensive education. Therefore, it is the duty of teachers to foster this relationship between students and parents; between the school and agencies in the community. Besides, there should be harmonious relationships between individuals and the school community for a holistic development of our students (Aina et al.,

2015).

Teacher education is unique to training individuals in the human interpersonal relation. On this basis, pre-service teachers had gone through psychology, sociology, guidance and counseling in education for the purpose of teaching and learning. The way and how teachers who are not exposed to this type of training respond to interpersonal relation is different. This shows a lack of professional teaching focus. This could be dangerous for our education and national security at this time the country is trying to survive Boko Haram menace. It is the teacher professional duty to give a good interpretation of education in a way to promote a good relationship between different groups in the society. Sani (2014) worried that some teachers trigger religious crises based on the wrong interpretation of religion given to the students. A well-trained teacher who has a teaching focus by his or her

training knows that success of education is above religion, ethnic or cultural sentiment.

**Punctuality.** The general axiom that “punctuality is the soul of business” is true according to Aina et al. (2004), that a teacher not punctual in his or her class has lost teaching focus. The argument here is that coming late to the class is the same as wasting the instructional time. Most of the teachers employed who are not trained as teachers are always absent or come late to classes in Nigeria. They do this to allow them

to seek for other jobs especially in their choice field of studies. The teacher absenteeism rate had a greater influence on the academic performance of the student (Obeng-Denteh, Yeboah, Charles and Monkah, 2011). The figure 1 below vividly illustrates what teacher professional focus entails.

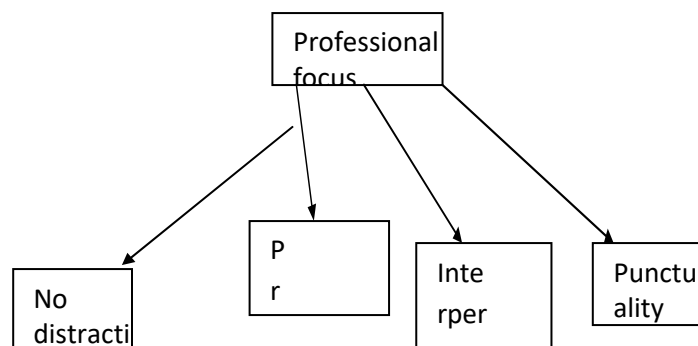


Fig. 1: Professional focus adapted from Aina et al (2015)



## Conclusion

The teacher is vital in the development of any nation because the quality of education depends on the qualified teachers. Apparently from this article, only professionally trained teachers should be allowed to teach in Nigerian schools. There are crucial educational constructs a qualified teacher must possess to be effective and impact the students positively. These are self-efficacy and pedagogical content knowledge. Research studies show that these constructs are positively correlated with the students' academic achievement. Nevertheless, adequacy of the constructs is found among the professional teachers.

Besides, the article also looked at the problem of out-of-field teaching as a problem among non-professional teachers. Out-of-field teaching blinds the government to the reality of a shortage of qualified teachers; it affects teachers' professional development and many more. The professional focus of a teacher is very germane to the success of any teacher in the classroom. To be professionally focused, a teacher must ensure full concentration on teaching; sound professional development; good interpersonal relation and punctual in classes. Achieving these could only be possible through an individual who is trained as a teacher.

Given this, it is not proper for any reason to employ anyone who is not a graduate of education or trained as a teacher to teach in Nigeria primary and secondary schools. Given this conclusion, the following suggestions are important:

- The government should be serious about the teacher education and make it very important
- The government should give teachers in primary and secondary schools special salary scale like that of the tertiary institution lecturers.
- Teachers must be respected in the society as it is done in countries like Finland
- The government should establish universities of teacher education where only those who will be classroom teachers are trained.
- The government should stop

appointing anyone who has not studied education as a discipline as a Minister of Education as done in other ministries

- The government should call for the national education summit where experts in education will come together and discuss the Nigerian education.
- Finally, anyone employed to teach in the primary or secondary school must first be made to attend at least six months of teacher training. Anyone who has not attended this training and certificated should not be confirmed as a teacher.

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