

TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES AS LEADERS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This qualitative multiple case study explored the responsibilities of teacher leaders in the classroom, within the school, outside the school and in the community in the context of Nigerian public secondary schools. It aimed to determine the extent of teacher leaders' responsibilities in relation to national development within and outside the school. Participants included nine teachers, three principals, vice-principals and an educational administrator in an Educational District in Lagos, Nigeria. Data for the study was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The study revealed that the professional, administrative and social roles of teachers are a continuum within and outside the school. It also shows that teachers spend majority of their time in the classroom as well as assisting in administration and managerial processes in a school system. The study recommends giving merit awards to teachers to enhance their image and self worth. It also recommends that professional standards and training should be of importance in the teaching and learning processes. The study contributes to professional development of teachers thereby enhancing their responsibilities in and outside the schools.

Keywords: teacher responsibilities, teacher leadership, teacher professionalism, educator social, recognition.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers play various roles both formally and informally in school, outside the school and in the community. As leaders, they are recognised first as expert teachers, who spend majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles, assisting in administration and managerial processes in a school system ([1], [2]). Traditionally, teachers are associated with formal titles which identify them as teacher leaders. This traditional method of teacher leadership is by obtaining an administrative position or being involved in the activist movement or participating in union activities or as a member in an advisory committee, or as a mentor [3]. In Nigeria, teachers traditional method of leadership is through non positional (informal) and formal career progression ([4], [5]). Research has shown that teachers may engage in informal leadership without the benefit of a designated title [6]. The informal way of teacher leadership is by sharing expertise, volunteering to participate in school projects, assisting colleagues with classroom duties and engaging in experimentation and examination of more powerful instructional techniques with colleagues [7]. However, teachers' responsibilities could be categorised as administrative and professional. The administrative teacher leadership roles include being a lead teacher, master teacher, departmental head, a union representative or mentor or a member of the school governing council [8]. Professionally, teacher leaders are expected to carry out a wide-range of functions which may include, stimulating the professional growth of colleagues, being an advocate for teachers' work, improving the school's decision-making processes, inducting new teachers into the school or positively influencing the capacity to implement change [7]. Teachers' responsibilities as leaders are reflected in the ways and manners in which they perform their duties to effect change in schools and outside the school so as to enhance student outcomes and promote good relationships in the community. Against this background, this study attempted to answer the question: What are teachers' responsibilities as leaders inside, outside and in the community in Nigerian Secondary schools?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In every formal organisation, there is a professional code of conduct that guides both the professional and personal behaviour of individuals. It also specifies the professionalism, discipline, rights and responsibilities of a teacher and the ethical standards expected of professional teachers. The conduct

of teachers' relationship with colleagues, students, parents and in the community is also specified in the code [9]). In Nigerian public secondary schools, teachers' responsibilities in schools are to see to the welfare or well-being of students, teach and conduct evaluations of the subject taught. The teacher is to ensure the cleanliness of the classroom, mark attendance registers, be a counsellor, adviser to students and their associations, and be readily available for students. The teacher decides what comes in or goes out in the classroom [9]. Teachers serve as counsellors, advisers, departmental heads and curriculum implementers or as association heads in the school. In Nigeria however, teachers are grouped according to their subject area under a Head of Department [9]. The Heads of Department are appointed by the principal, based on their seniority, qualifications and performance. They are enjoined to work hand in hand with the principal in order to ensure the realisation of educational goals [9].

In the school system, there are three broad cadres of teachers; who when employed are charged with the development of good teaching practice within the school and their progression is meeting the criteria and regulations of promotion. In the school system, there are subject teachers, the class teachers and the year tutor, each with their own unique duties in order to ensure improvement in the teaching service. Apart from being an authority in the classroom, they also serve as patrons/matrons of students associations and supervise school based associations in order to aid the total development of learners. Above all, principal shall monitor and supervise the activities and progress of the school societies [9]. Some teachers are appointed or elected into teachers union or subject associations or serve in one committees or the other and have leadership experience within the school. This leadership experience can be regarded as informal teacher leadership as opposed to those appointed by the Ministry of Education with formal authority who are known as school leaders. The numerous roles teachers play in school system resulted in the Nigerian Government affirming that: "Teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development, because... "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" [10].

Another characteristic of teacher responsibility is that they are committed to continuous improvement in instruction and student learning. This is achieved through the development of professional learning communities at the school site through modelling of effective communication, collaboration skills and facilitating the use of research based instructional strategies and data driven action plans. They also "help redesign schools, mentor their colleagues, engage in problem solving at the school level and provide professional growth activities for colleagues" ([11], [12]). Experts have noted that society needs teachers for realizing its political, economic, moral, social and technological advancements and aspirations [13]. Teachers are key to educational reform, school improvement and they are instruments of change ([14], [15]). Literature is replete with the importance of teachers as the 'hub of any educational system' [16]. They are also regarded as the "most important resource available to education [17]. In addition, they are described as "the determinants of quality education" as they are responsible for the translation and interpretation of educational policies, curriculum instructional materials packages and assessment of learning outcome at the levels of learners [18]. Furthermore, teachers exert influence on character formation, socialization of the children, they have the knowledge of students and they show dedication, empathy, team-spirit to students and their work [19]. Research has shown that in spite of teachers rendering essential services in the country, the public has not really supported teaching compared to other professions. There is also disinclination towards becoming teachers in Nigeria attributed to the low salary and status of the profession [20]. There was a time in Nigeria, when landlord refused teachers as tenants in their houses due to their low pay and incessant strikes over salaries and wages [4].

In addition, the way and manner in which teachers perceived themselves; the way society perceives teachers is unflattering. Some parents do not appreciate the efforts of teachers in teaching. This could be related to societal perception of teachers and the teaching profession. These assumptions about teachers weigh heavily on their self-efficacy and professional identity [4]. Teacher identity is contingent upon the socio-cultural values, beliefs and practices, as well as the dominant ideology within the micro and macro-societies in which the teacher operates and this has an effect on how teachers perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others [21]. This reveals that identity is both transformational and transformative as individual teachers revalue, negotiate and re-construct their respective identities ([22], [23]).

However, there is a need for schools to provide teachers with leadership opportunities outside of the classroom, which provides a means for growth. These leadership opportunities if provided increases a teacher's spectrum of influence as well as provides the resistance associated with improvement [24]. Literature has revealed that teachers teach because of their love for teaching and for imparting

knowledge to the pupils ([25], [26]). This shows that teachers' authority and identity come from their ability to teach the specialised knowledge acquired as a teacher. This professional knowledge authority of a teacher as a knowledge specialist allows them pursue their role with passion and commitment to the profession.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a multiple case, qualitative research methodology which is exploratory and descriptive. This methodology was employed to understand issues from the participants' viewpoints [27] as well as to get a sense of how the participants' experiences were created and given meaning [28]. The participants were purposefully selected from the five public urban schools in Nigeria. There were nine teachers, three Principals, three Vice-Principals and one Educational Administrator in Education District IV who participated in the study.

Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence. The interviews were conducted at the school sites, after school hours and during free periods over an eight-month period. The interviews elicited information on the participants' biographical information, on their perceptions and understandings about teacher leadership [29]. The interviews were audio taped for easy verbatim transcriptions of participants' responses in order to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes long. Data from the semi-structured interview and documentary evidence were triangulated in order to establish the credibility of findings and easy interpretations [27]. Data was analysed using content and discourse analysis so as to understand the interaction and the literal meaning of language of people in their day-to-day activities [30].

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg; Education District VI in Lagos, Nigeria; also from principals of the five public secondary schools. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and the schools. The five schools in this context are located in urban areas in Lagos and are funded by the Lagos State Government. The participants are full time staff and are certified by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) as well as being members of the Nigeria Union of Teachers. The schools are in the Education District VI and are far from each other. One of the schools in the study is situated in a military facility, two are in an estate; one is close to the seaports in Lagos, and one is situated very close to a major highway. The data from the semi-structured interviews and policy documents were categorised into major themes. These themes cohered around teachers responsibilities in and outside the school, as well as in the community.

3.1 Teachers' Responsibility in the Classroom

Teachers' responsibility refers to the duty of a professional teacher in a classroom teaching students so as to achieve educational goals. Teachers are expected to ensure that teaching and learning takes place by teaching the students, and also evaluating their work. They are also expected to be a good role model to students in both speech and conduct. This is significant in helping students to achieve their educational goals as well as the national educational goals. Teachers' duties are well stated in the Lagos State Teachers' Handbook, the 2003 edition. The handbook also outlines the sanctions to be meted out to any erring teacher [9]. In the study, the 16 participants interviewed believed that teachers' responsibilities include teaching students to grasp mastery of subject matter, ensuring effective classroom management and above all be a role model to the students.

Okoli, one of the principals believes that teachers' responsibility is to teach students irrespective of their administrative position the teacher occupies in the school. Okoli remarked: *Their responsibility is to teach the students; the fact that you are a year tutor does not mean you will not go and teach your subject.*

This view is supported by Adebayo, another principal. Adebayo contended that the teacher must be abreast of his subject and have the ability to manage his classroom. Effective classroom management will enable the teacher to evaluate the students to determine if learning has taken place or not. An excerpt from Adebayo reveals that: *The teacher must have a grasp of his subject ...he must have class control measures and be able to test students of their ability of having understood the lesson he had just taught.* This could occur in an atmosphere where the teacher creates a strong relationship with students and having lessons that are student centred. Also by establishing clear expectations of students, this helps in constructing an effective classroom management structure [31]. Therefore, the

teacher's relationship with students will impact students' willingness to comply with classroom rules and expectations [32].

Similarly, Loveth one of the teachers, responded that the teacher's responsibility is to teach and create a conducive class." Loveth said: *My responsibility is to teach and to create a conducive class* Clark, a vice principal also spoke in the same vein that teacher's responsibility is to teach students in the classroom. She said: *the responsibilities of teacher leaders, in the classroom, we are supposed to teach students*. The excerpts highlight the responsibility of teachers in teaching students and ensuring that teachers create a favourable atmosphere for teaching and learning. The participants' use of the word 'my responsibility' shows that it is an obligation on the part of teachers to teach students.

3.2 Teachers' Responsibility within the School

Teachers' responsibility within the school refers to the activities teachers engage in as part of the academic community. These responsibilities are both academic and administrative. In the administrative roles, teachers are expected to participate at staff and Parents Teacher Association meetings as this will enhance the implementation of school programmes. In addition, they serve as advisor to students clubs and societies, on programmes, finances and general welfare of such associations. Their academic roles include teaching students, serving on committees to select instructional aid and to implement the curriculum. Experts have identified 10 roles that teachers can fulfil in schools to support school and students' success. These roles are as follows: teachers as resource providers, i.e. they provide materials to colleagues in their teaching and learning. They also help colleagues with instructional strategies and in curriculum implementation. Teachers also provide support for other colleagues through mentoring and team teaching. In addition, they serve in committees and jointly plan professional development programmes. Furthermore, they encourage colleagues to analyze and use data more effectively, learn new things, or change the status quo [33].

According to Saida, a teacher participant, apart from teachers being responsible for teaching pupils in the classroom, the teacher is expected to ensure that the school environment is clean through monitoring and supervision of students or those in charge of cleaning the school. Saida explained: *the responsibility of the teacher is to teach in the classroom and within the school and to ensure that there is monitoring and supervision and cleanness of the school*.

The above view is supported by Orji, a teacher, that it is the duty of the teacher to ensure that the school is clean and to ensure also that students are in the classrooms. Orji remarked: *within the school, yes it is the duty of the leaders to make sure that the school is clean then while the teaching is going in the classroom and one student is outside and if you see any student outside you take him to the right classroom*.

Bayo, a teacher participant, provided a summary of what teachers' responsibilities within the school should look like and he maintained that those responsibilities are additional to what teachers are expected to do in schools. Teachers are expected to be punctual and if their names are on the rooster they should be on duty, they must do what is expected. Such responsibilities entail seeing to the cleanliness of the school, as well as making sure teachers in the school perform their professional duties and also that students do not go against school rules by leaving the school until the appointed time.

Bayo: Since they are additional responsibility, teachers must be ready to do the extra responsibility. For instance, a principal used to say "when you are made a teacher on duty, you are the principal for that week," you should carry out every school activities starting from the morning duty, be punctual to duty, man the gate, see to the cleanliness of the environment and ensure that your teachers perform their duty, because, as a duty teacher, you must monitor your teachers, see that the classroom is intact, ensure that students don't violate school rules by going outside the school except at break or closing times.

Adebayo, a principal provided a new dimension to the roles teachers are expected to perform in schools. To him, teachers must exhibit characteristics that are worth emulating such as having self-control and be a model. The teacher must be somebody that will not bend rules to satisfy him or herself but must be able to uphold professionalism. Adebayo stated: *S/he must be self-disciplined, uncompromising and be a role model*. The excerpts highlight the numerous roles teacher play in schools to self, colleagues and students in enhancing a productive academic community.

3.3 Teachers' Responsibility outside the School

This entails teachers' responsibilities outside the school towards students' actions or activities that could either make or mar the image of the school. The participants maintained that it is the duty of teachers to call to order or restrain any student that engages in any behaviour that is deemed not good outside the school. Aladelola, a principal said that it is the duty of a teacher to correct students outside the school when they do things that are not good and be an arbiter when they fight outside the school. Aladelola stated that: *As teacher, when you see something among the students that is not good, you caution them. When students fight, you settle the matter amicably and if they need to be punished you do that.*

This view is also buttressed by Loveth, one of the teachers who posited that teachers have a responsibility to correct students when they go wrong outside the school. Loveth explained that if she sees any students engaging in any act that is unlawful outside the school, she will stop by to settle the issue through correction and then motivate students on the best possible ways to tackle such an issue. Loveth stated: *So if I see my students doing what is not right, outside the school, I stand by to correct, motivate.*

Similarly, Massarawa observed that teachers' work did not stop in the school but extend outside the school in moulding student characters. Massarawa explained:

Outside the school, as a teacher, like what I've said, you are building in totality. Your work did not stop...in the school... Outside the school as a teacher, when you see your students even fighting, misbehaving outside the school, once you are there, they must be able to stop what they are doing because you are their leader.

In the same vein, Clark, added that outside the school, the teacher can still correct the students using wisdom, because the students would recognise them. Clark stated that:

Outside the school? Well outside the school, we are no longer with the children outside the school, but if you are going along the road, your students are your student anywhere. If you see them misbehaving you can still call them to order. When they see you coming they will say 'that is my teacher coming or...that is my principal coming...that is my VP...' so it's always there. Even outside, although you may still correct them. But outside the school, use wisdom to do whatever you want to do there.

The various excerpts show that teachers' roles extend outside the four walls of a classroom and outside the school gates. Teachers are able to perform this due to their legal-rational authority as teachers. It shows the significance of teachers' roles in moulding and shaping the characters of students into a productive venture that will be beneficial to the students, parents and the community.

3.4 Teachers' Responsibility in the Community

Teachers' responsibility is the role teachers' play as a member of the community by obeying the law, payment of taxes and contributing his/her quota to the development of such communities. Massarawa a teacher remembered with nostalgia the respect accorded teachers in the community after independence and when parents consulted teachers to provide counselling services to their children in the community. But now teachers still perform the same roles. Massarawa explained: *In the community we live, those old good days, teachers they are like kings in the community where you live. When any issues occurred especially with their children, they go to you. And till now, you still have to play that role.*

Accordingly, Johnson a vice principal noted that teachers are part of the community. In one way or the other, the students might be related to teacher by blood or kinship. In whatever way, they are still students and the teacher has a responsibility to modify their behaviour anytime they do something wrong. Johnson comments that:

And in the community, you see them as your students in your school, as your children, as your nieces, your nephew, your cousins, and make sure that things go well with them. They are children, they're students. They cannot but err at times. You just have to correct them and they move on.

Literature has shown that in the colonial era and a period after independence, Nigerian teachers were well respected as professionals, and role models with a vast repertoire of knowledge in the community. During this time, society depended on the teachers for the discipline of youth as well as

their moral and academic development. In addition, teachers served in very powerful committees in the community because they were sources of wisdom and knowledge. With the passage of time, the respect and status accorded teachers started dwindling, when the military and politicians started abusing and degrading teachers; coupled with the low salary of teachers ([34], [35]).

4 DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated teachers' responsibilities as leaders inside and outside the school in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The study showed that teachers' responsibilities progress along a continuum whether inside or outside the school. Teachers' professional responsibilities as loco-parentis, judge, counsellor among other responsibilities extend beyond the school into the communities thereby helping students to achieve their educational aims. This enables teachers to be accountable to self, students and parents. That is why the National Policy on Education (NPE) has affirmed that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" [10]. The finding is important as it reveals the various roles teachers play in national development as professionals and as leaders to be relied upon for value judgement. In spite of the low societal perception of teachers as not being professionals or the teaching professional as not being lucrative when compared with other professions, teachers' contributions to national development cannot be overemphasised. Thus, societal perceptions of teachers must change based on their contributions to national development. Teachers on their own must be proud of their profession and see themselves as professionals. Also, teachers must embrace professional development so as to be abreast of new best practices in the field.

5 CONCLUSION

The study showed various responsibilities of teachers in the country. The findings revealed that teachers must be appreciated and respected based on their roles in achieving educational goals. In addition, societal low perception of teachers limits their self efficacy and worth. In addition, the study shows that the teaching profession must be given its pride of place among other professions. This will instil confidence in teachers thereby improve teaching and learning and enable teachers to do more. Teachers should continue to see their roles as rendering of essential services to the nation to the attainment of educational goals and students academic achievement.

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