



## **Effective Teaching And Learning**

By Kofi Essien

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### **Introduction**

My decision to write on this topic has afforded me the opportunity to do a retrospection of my own teaching career and that of the many I have come across during my work as a classroom practitioner, a senior school administrator, teacher professional development supporter and my two years spent at the Ministry of Education supporting the ICT in Education Unit.

The more I think about these times the closer I come to the following conclusions which have informed the bases of what I am going to share with you:

1. Effective teaching begets effective learning; therefore an effective teacher makes for an effective learner.
2. It does not matter the number of years you might have taught, it does not matter the conditions under which you teach what really matters is the attitude and /or spirit with which you teach.

I have heard arguments that an increase in salary and generally better service conditions will lead to effective teaching. I think everybody deserves better service conditions and pay rise too. But I have seen a number of pay increases and genuine attempts to make service conditions better but we have always ended up clamoring for more: and more teacher groups are springing up. So at what point would we say that our conditions are better enough to warrant our being effective teachers?

Whether it is 'Single spine', 'Double spine', or 'Triple spine' for me the value as far as effective teaching and learning is and has and would be the same if we do not work on our attitude to work.

I am not oblivious to the various calls by education experts for the need to have a number of things in place and certain conditions prevailing before effective teaching and learning can take place. But my response to that has been a number of rhetorical questions.

Will we ever be able to eradicate all schools under trees any time soon? Will we ever be able to provide all the TLMS needed any time soon? Can we satisfy all or the majority of those conditions stated in the theories and pieces of advice people are always quick to give when the issue of effective teaching and learning arises? Can we? Can we do that any time soon?

I know that there are genuine efforts on the part of government and other stakeholders to address these issues but these conditions will be with us for some time to come; how long I wish I knew. The question then remains: are we being told that until all these have been addressed we cannot and will not be able to have effective teaching and learning?

What about stories of old and current greats in society who have had to attend basic education under harrowing experiences but who have still made it to the top? Was it not a certain teacher who inspired them despite all these harrowing experiences to break through the basic level and to go on to become who they are now?

The more I think about it the more I am forced to conclude that what matters most in learning is not the number of years a teacher has been teaching and/or the circumstances under which the teacher has been teaching. Though agreed they make teaching easier, what really matters most is the attitude or the spirit with which the teacher teaches.

Yes don't get me wrong. We will have to strengthen further the 'spine' of the teacher. We will have to work towards zero schools under trees and provide more classrooms. We will have to reduce class sizes. We will have to provide the much needed TLMs.

But are these not the obvious? And are we not so quick to point to them and attempt to, genuinely or otherwise, work at them? If we forget to work on the hidden, our attitude, which will rather trigger the greater success, whatever we do regarding the obvious will not result in the desired results, I believe.

### **The Effective Ghanaian Teacher**

I am fully convinced that despite the prevailing circumstances effective teaching and learning can still take place. We will have to produce effective teachers. We need to redefine though, looking at our own peculiar circumstances who an effective teacher should be and then ask ourselves if our current teacher training regime makes for the production of such teachers.

The effective Ghanaian teacher should be a teacher who rises above whatever situation, circumstances and/or challenges to lead his pupils to a joyful learning experience: so that the learners would want to learn because they want to learn and not because they have been told or forced to learn.

The effective Ghanaian teacher should be able to connect with his students. Like a priest he/she must be able to touch the hearts of his/her learners and appeal to their conscience.

The effective Ghanaian teacher must form a team with his/her learners and together constantly explore various ways in which they can maximize their teaching and learning experiences taking into consideration their very own peculiar and particular challenges and circumstances.

The effective Ghanaian teacher should make teaching and learning a shared responsibility. He should possess the ability to turn the classroom into a learning laboratory...a learning factory where this shared responsibility is carried out. He must make learning practical and enjoyable with both teachers and learners ready to teach and learn because they want to and not because they have been told to do so.

The effective Ghanaian teacher has to be a balanced person who will not resort to the cane as the first line of authority. He has to be innovative, intrinsically motivated to soldier on even when

the pay check is not as fat as we will all wish and be resilient enough to do a good job despite pressures from family, society, church, landlord, etc he/she must be morally, professional and contractually accountable to society and should be proud to visibly live his/her profession.

### **'Making' the Effective Ghanaian Teacher**

Making an effective teacher has clear implications for the way we initially select and prepare people to become teachers as well as how we continuously support them in their chosen carrier. What goes on and into teacher initial preparation and continuous professional development? For me this is where it all begins. When we get it wrong at this point we should forget about effective teaching and learning.

In the olden days teachers were tailor made and not just trained. These days it is more of mass production. Even so we are not able to produce enough to meet our national requirements. Making a teacher in my view goes beyond just training in the pedagogy and subject matter content but also should involve 'formation' of the teacher.

I will not dare suggest that we go back to old teacher training ways – asking a tertiary student to scrub or ask for exeat before leaving campus But what I think is needed is to develop our own peculiar brand of teacher training modules based on widely acknowledged principles, concepts, theories and best practices. One that helps us produce well formed teachers with the right attitudes who can work despite (and address) our peculiar and particular challenges.

### **Conclusion**

Yes we need to take care of the obvious; our large class sizes, our school under trees, continue working at salaries..... but most importantly we need to work on the hidden as well so that we will have a new kind of Ghanaian teacher with the right attitude and a new kind of identity.

I believe that it is only when we have this new kind of teacher in place that any little effort that we make towards providing the obvious will be an added bonus. Not the other way round.