

The Born and the Made Teacher: Harmonizing the Gains of Both for Teaching Efficiency

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Abstract: Effective teachers possess a variety of skills set that appear magically and enhances transplant of knowledge. The core of each developed skill of the teacher lays a chamber that holds remnants of reflection of what transpires during the process of teaching and learning. This paper sets out to validate if teachers are born or made for proper harness of the skills of teaching and learning. The effective teachers are not born with “it” but the “it” of an effective teacher could be developed through the reflection process over a period of time through induction coach of beginning teachers and afford the opportunity to guide, support and accelerate the crucial process of development. Effective teachers are indeed made and those who are born teach with numerous opportunities for instructional focused conversations of reflection. Quality induction programme proactively addressed the challenging realities that teachers face in their formative years. When teachers are provided with quality support they develop as reflective practitioners which accelerates their growth and a foundation for expectation for continued growth and excellence within the classroom is laid.

Keywords: Born or made teacher, effective teacher, harnessing the gains of efficiency and teaching and learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is absolutely true that some people from the time they are in first grade, know they want to be teachers. For others, the idea to become a teacher can be a sudden insight, or a feeling that ferments for years in some remote corner of their consciousness. Regardless of where the idea comes from, for many, the images associated with becoming a teacher are compelling.

In spite of these, so many engaged government teachers have retired and left teaching in droves, probably more than a million new teachers will be needed to replace them to keep pace with the anticipated growth of students population, the current world wide recession notwithstanding. Perhaps, you will be one of these new teachers, perhaps not.

The teacher in the time past was regarded as all-knowing and all-giving. His major task then was to transfer such knowledge or skills to those who needed to acquire them. Students’ activities were limited to their presence in class and reception of idea of the teacher. Indeed, they were not to be heard but seen. The result is that not many people persist in thinking of the teacher as a person who possesses unlimited knowledge and authority.

Today, the reverse is the case. A teacher is made to recognize that they are also learners with students. Their role has thus shifted from that of a monopolist of ideas and skills to that of guidance of the learning activity. In this connection, the teacher serves as one who creates the necessary conditions that will make learning meaningful and pleasurable. He also provides leadership in the quest for knowing by not only providing available information to the learner but also developing in the latter an inquiring mind, the capacity to inquire into things, and search for new ideas and approaches to the problems of life.

The concept of teaching sees the teacher as a mediator of learning; this is one who assists the learner in ways which bring about observable benefits both to him and to the larger society. If the teacher is regarded as a mediator in learning, it is logical to expect him to meet special requirements.

He should understand the individual learner for whom he serves and mediates his physical, mental, emotional, social and other characteristics. He should possess some idea of how knowledge can be derived, organized and shared with the learner functioning in this way, and in the main, underscores the relevance of teacher in educational psychology.

The question of teachers being born or made, although a conundrum can be discussed perhaps, we may be tempted to say that exceptionally effective teachers are both born (gifted) and made (trained in pedagogy). I want to agree with the late A. Bartlett Giamati's assessment that, "Teachers believe they have a gift for giving; it drives them with the same irrepressible drive that drives others to create a work of art or a market or a building".

Like professional athletes and accomplished artists, "teachers believe they have a gift (that) drives them". And like artists, teachers have a gift that is refined throughout a career by training and performance. Perhaps you are thinking, "oh no! it's another nature-nurture theory!". If so, you are correct. Exceptional teachers are born with personality characteristics that are developed by experience and enhanced by specific information that only education can provide. In 1936, two psychologists turned every page of an unabridged English Dictionary and found 17,953 words that describe psychological differences; or traits, among people (Allport and Odbert, 1936).

To the extent that personality has a genetic component, teachers are born. Also, like exceptional athletes and artists, their genetic gifts either will thrive or lie dormant depending on their nourishment. Before presenting four specific thoughts in response to the question, I offer this conclusion; there is no such entity as a born teacher. However, by nature, some people possess a combination of personality characteristics that are conducive to effective teaching, further, these characteristics have been enriched by a lifetime of favourable nurturing. Nevertheless, even the most genetically blessed teachers would benefit from a teacher education programme.

Who is a Teacher?

According to Longman Oxford Dictionary, Teacher is a person who teaches or instructs, especially as a profession, instructor. Teachers are highly intelligent people with an ability to impart knowledge and understanding to their students. However, most teachers have defined personal characteristics in common.

According to Denis Aubuchon, the term 'teacher' protects an environment in our educational system but it is not the only place where teachers exist. The term teacher is also a broad term and teachers have had many other names. But for Agbama, (2008) a teacher is simply someone who teaches or imparts knowledge. However, today, the expectation of a teacher's role in any society goes beyond the realms of a knowledge-provider. As Kesimba (2004) contends, being a teacher consists of wearing many 'hats'. We all know that teachers guide and advise on social, moral and educational issues; what they do, however is mould a child's personality, aid in their attitude towards learning. For Esunra (2006) also a teacher is someone who embodies all those qualities that exude the ability to transfer knowledge and skills from master to students.

Who is a Born/Made Teacher?

Is pre-service training necessary? This is the title of an article by David Gordon (1980). In this article, the author argues that teachers are born and not made and as such it does not make sense to establish a teacher training institution which is to be trusted with the task of making teachers. Langeweld (1990 & Undiyaundeye (2015) effectively demolishes this notion. They contend that the idea that a person is exclusively fit for a particular profession is an illusion and that the born teacher may be born for teaching in one situation and do not nearly do well in another situation. There is no doubt however that, the notion of the "natural teacher" especially at the secondary level held sway for long in many countries. In England, for example, it was believed for long that the secondary school teacher was sufficiently equipped by sound moral character and a good knowledge of his subject (Goodings et al, 1982 & Monteiro, 2013).

It is gratifying, however that the need for training courses for teachers is now universally accepted. All over the world, the value of instruction depends to a large extent, on the quality of teachers. Indeed, teachers are the lifelines of the sound educational system of any nation. If the quality of education is shaken, it is usually not uncommon to point a finger at teachers.

Four specific thoughts if teachers were born and made:

It is undeniable that content knowledge of a discipline is indispensable for effective teaching. Also, it is true that an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, acting and relating (i.e. personality) cannot be appreciably altered by an

education department's curriculum. However, to assert that contents knowledge and personality are the only two qualities of an effective teacher would be an untested assumption. Although personality cannot be taught, specific characteristic and behaviours can be isolated and developed. Without teacher education research, the traits and strategies of effective teachers would not be identified.

History is replete with exceptional teachers like Jesus, Socrates and countless others in professions like medicine, engineering, law and architecture who did not study "how to teach". These are teachers who simply presented and present of plenitude of their knowledge and force of their personalities. Although Socrates and Jesus would appear to make a case against teacher education programmes, actually the opposite is true. Jesus employed parables in much of his teachings, Socrates taught using questions. There is much to be learned from defining effective teaching and analyzing the techniques of Jesus, Socrates and others. Teacher education is concerned with identifying instructional strategies that work and training prospective teacher in the application of those strategies.

Further, medical and law students are left to them to deal with their learning disabilities, developmental disorder and other problems they might have in mastering material. In primary and secondary schools, teachers are expected to recognize and accommodate the needs of challenged students. Nobody is born with a knowledge of how to identify and respond to those students. The ability to teach adaptively requires training.

The assumption that a teacher's effectiveness will improve over time with repetition is an untested hypothesis. Teacher education provides for improvement by teaching teachers how to formulate plans for instruction and evaluation resulting from classroom experience. The repetition of ineffective teaching leads to entrenchments of bad practice, not improvement, while it is probable that lecturers will improve with repetition and research in their disciplines, teaching involves more than lecturing. Certainly, primary and secondary school teachers are not mere lecturers.

No clear-thinking teacher educator would say that all untrained teachers are incompetent. Untrained teachers are not, necessarily, incompetent, neither is it professional to assume their competency. The academic community lives, moves and has its being in research and scholarship. It is not in the spirit of the academy to assume competency of untrained teachers simply because they have been teaching. However, all of us, no matter how gifted, could benefit from training in pedagogy, the art and science of teaching. By analogy, professional singers have voice teachers and major leagues baseball players have batting coaches. Teachers, not lecturers, who instruct by way of lectures referred to as sermons, study sermon preparation and delivery in homiletics as a part of seminary education).

Kelly-Gangi and Patterson, (2001) contended that, "Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of a fire" Teacher education help make the classroom a more combustible place.

2. HARMONIZING THE GAINS OF BORN/MADE TEACHERS –SYNERGY EFFICIENCY

The first significant job of the teacher whether born or made is to plan what to teach, how to teach and the manner in which the outcome of teaching is going to be measured. Related to this is the issue of developing the ability to inquire and experiment with ideas in the minds of learners. It is needless for this to have a group of boys and girls who do no more than absorb whatever the teacher provides.

Learning is an active process in which the learner is supposed to relate whatever is newly taught to his previous experience. Based on such a relationship, he would be able to determine how best to use the additional knowledge.

A second major function of the teacher is that, he estimates the educational needs of each individual. This means that in the process of interacting with the learner, the teacher should be able to determine what the student can do, with a view to deciding what the person is going to have to do.

A third function of the teacher is to establish the proper climate for learning to take place. In order to be able to do this, there must be indication that the teacher accepts the learner for what he is worth. Respect, warmth, love and sincerity, these are qualities which the teacher must bring to his relationship with the learner. The teacher should not ridicule any person in his class. This is important since a positive attitude to students helps to sustain feelings of self-esteem and in turn makes them favourably disposed to the work of the school.

The teachers are also expected to maintain some contact with the home of each learner and even with the larger community. He should show interest in appreciating the social circumstances of children placed in his care. The

importance of this comes from the fact that it is not always appreciated that inability to learn may be linked to cases that have no direct relationship with classroom work. Poor learning, for instance, may be as a result of hunger, emotional stress or poor health. Part of the custodial function of the teacher is to look for causes of unusual behaviour and be able to provide appropriate responses.

Some of these cases can be recognized by the teacher alone while others require assistance from the members of the child's family or even others in the larger family. Determining how well the learner has profited from the learning activity is another major function of the teacher. They must be able to assess the extent to which his instructional activities, have been so that he can take remedial steps.

The teacher serves as a motivator of learning. The ability of the student to learn is to a large extent, dependent on what the teacher does to arouse his interest in school work and bring him to appreciate the importance of education as a human activity. The job of motivating learners implies that the teacher has some understanding of the individual differences in the physical and psychological make-up of human beings. This ability makes it possible for him to recognize that some learners are slow in benefiting from ideas and skills while others are fast.

The development of positive values in the students is a significant aspect of the work of the teacher. In school, students are supposed to be led into such values that encourage respect for elders and authority, cooperation, regard for beauty, good citizenship, creativity and all the qualities that work towards the good of the human society.

In order to organize learning activities effectively, a teacher has to understand 'how' and 'why' people learn. It is not enough gathering children in an enclosure in the name of teaching them. There must be a conscious effort to learn about the conditions that favour the teaching of individuals.

3. CONCLUSION

As a teacher, whether born or made, you will wear many hats, you will have to be conscious of the roles teachers assume in carrying out their duties:

- Communicator
- Disciplinarian
- Conveyor of information
- Evaluator
- Classroom manager
- Counsellor
- Member of many teams and groups
- Decision-maker
- Role-model
- Surrogate parent.

Each of these roles requires practice and skills that are often not taught but imbibed tacitly.

As a teacher, whether born or made, your day does not necessarily end when the school bell rings. If you are conscientious, you will be involved in after school meetings, committee, assisting students, grading homework, assignments, project and calling parents. All these demand some sacrifice of your personal time. If you are committed to excellence as a teacher, it's a sacrifice you can live with. If not, you will be a misnomer.

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