

JOHN CUMBERBATCH LECTURE

Presentation on

***Quality Teacher for Quality Education
Training for a Stronger Teaching Force!***

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I count it a special privilege and indeed an honour to be sharing in this fashion with you my colleagues and friends. As Caribbean people, it is important that we create opportunities like these where we can share ideas and experiences. This is not for us, but more so for who and what we represent. As teachers, we are important players in Nation Building and by extension, regional integration and strengthening of the ties that bind us as one people, with one aim and a common destiny. Our task is even more critical when we recognize that we touch and influence tomorrow's leaders on a daily basis. As former U.S. President John F. Kennedy once observed "*A child mis-educated is a child lost*". We therefore as teachers ought to provide the channels that will equip these future leaders with the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies that will ensure that every little thing will be alright tomorrow. I wish also to commend the Union(s) and the Ministry of Education for your full support in this venture. It is important that we recognize that the Ministry of Education and the teachers are working toward the same objectives and while we might differ on approaches from time to time, ultimately, it remains paramount that we work together in educating the nation's children.

Our theme for contemplation is not only relevant but timely – ***Quality Teachers for Quality Education***". ***Training for a Stronger Teaching Force!*** In order to create a back drop for our discourse on this theme, one has to place the issue of Quality Education in context because quality education is the desired objective.

The World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 did not only emphasize the need to achieve Education For All (EFA) but also noticed the need to improve the quality of education. We can quickly ask what is the value of education, if it is not one of quality. The Forum made the following recommendation: Improve all aspects of the quality of education to achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes for all – especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills'. (Daker Framework for Action Article 7, World Education Forum 2000). Article 28 of the convention on the Rights of the Child states the child's right to education

and the state's duty to ensure that primary education at least is made free. In article 29 of the same convention, the States are requested to recognize that education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights and developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others (United Nations, 1989).

Based on the recommendations in the Dakar Framework for Action and the convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as in a number of other international conventions, it can be concluded that everyone has the right, not only to receive education, but also to receive education of high quality. A quality education system must manage to provide all children and young people with a comprehensive education and with an appropriate preparation for working life, life in society and private life. This should be achieved without distinctions of any kind, such as those based on parents' income, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin.

These views are further amplified by the General Secretaries of Education International and the World Confederation of Teachers' in their joint message for World Teachers Day on October 5, 2005, when they stated that there is a worldwide consensus today on the need for education for all. The children and young people of every country deserve access to education. It is their right – fundamental human right. They further stated that the leaders of all our communities recognize that education for all is one of the essential keys to future prosperity and well-being for society.

WHAT IS QUALITY EDUCATION?

The question that readily pops up at this juncture is.... What is quality? Clearly there is no one definition for quality. One almost classical definition, is the way in which Coombs describes quality in his book – *The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties*: Qualitative dimension means much more than the

quality of education as customarily defined and judged by student learning achievements, in terms of traditional curriculum and standards. Quality also pertains to the relevance of what is taught and learned – to how well it fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question, given their particular circumstances and prospects. It also refers to the significant changes in the educational system itself, in the nature of its inputs (students, teachers, facilities, equipment and supplies); its objectives, curriculum and educational technologies; and its socio economic, cultural and political environment.’ (Coombs, 1985 p.105).

The World Bank has also tried to define quality. They state that ‘Quality in education is difficult to define and measure. An adequate definition must include student outcomes. Most educators would also include in the definition the nature of the educational experience that helps to produce those outcomes – the learning environment’. World Bank 1995 p. 46).

Another aspect of the discussion on how to define quality in education is whether quality is only a matter of learning things well. It may be argued that it is also of crucial importance to discuss what you learn. From this perspective quality is to learn the right things and to learn them well. It can be noted that education in many parts of the world do not deal with what is sometimes referred to as life skills. For many children in Africa for example, a quality education would be an education which included knowledge about HIV/AIDS and how to protect oneself.

Also within teacher Unions, the quality in education has been discussed. Education International has discussed this question at a number of conferences. Based on the results of much discussion, the following observations can be made:

- Quality in education is a concept which is rapidly evolving over time, but has also different emphasis according to different national education

sectors, cultures and different players in the education system – students, teachers, policymakers, the business community, unions etc.

- Education is always, in one sense or another, preparing individuals for the future. Young people and children must be given thorough educational tools to deal with the different tasks that they will need to perform in their lives, but equally be prepared to participate in the economic, cultural and political life of their societies. Education must help young people and children to develop themselves as individuals. They must learn the necessary skills and achieve the essential knowledge that will make it possible for them to play an active part in economic life. As citizens, they must learn to be critical and responsible. In today's world there is also a need to prepare young people and children to understand and participate in activities at an international level.
- The challenge to all education is to lay the foundation for change and at the same time to maintain the best qualities of the present. Every new generation must learn how to improve and develop society, but at the same time be able to base these changes on the traditions and achievements already established in society. Education has to encourage the capacities of young people in a society that has to recognize all these capacities before using them. There is a complex interrelation between education and society. Education in some ways is a mirror of society, but at the same time, a factor influencing its development.
- Quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question and the community, given the particular circumstance and prospects. The quality concept also has to embrace the development of every member's potential in every new generation
- Quality cannot be seen as a static concept. Quality and standards are in fact relative matters – relative to the particular time and place and to the particular learners and their circumstances. One important aspect of quality is the relevance of the subjects taught and the objectives of

education. Quality education is an education that provides students with the tools to deal with and find solutions to the challenges confronting mankind. In a changing world this means that what was considered quality education yesterday might not meet the standards of what will be understood as quality tomorrow. This is particularly true at present if we take into consideration the rapid changes created by new technologies. There is a need to discuss this concept continuously and to define and redefine it.

- Values, such as democracy and human rights must be understood as fundamentals for quality education. Teachers must teach about values not just through the substantive content of their teaching, but also by using methods, which will integrate democracy, interaction, equality, respect and cooperation as parts of the work in schools/institutions. In these areas, teachers must teach by example. They must be role models. This is only possible when the teachers' professional status is recognized and when they are given the appropriate support to fulfill their tasks.

TEACHER QUALITY

Now that we have looked at what could be regarded as critical components of quality education in a broad sense, I now would like to focus specifically on "Teacher Quality".

Teacher quality matters. In fact, it is considered the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. Education is the compilation and product of many and varied resources. Among these, teachers stand out as a key to realizing the high standards that are increasingly emphasized in schools and school systems worldwide. Despite general agreement about the importance of high-quality teachers, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, the public have been unable to reach a consensus about what specific qualities and characteristics make a good teacher. Quality teachers, according to Fred Van Leeuwen and Gaston de la Haye, do not simply appear out of thin

air! People must receive preparation/training of this, ‘the noblest of professions’. That means high quality initial training, providing future teachers with both academic knowledge and experience in teaching methods. Irrespective of the level of teaching, they must know their subject matter and know how to teach it! Above all they emphasize that teachers must understand their mission, the very basis of their vocation, is to develop the potential of children and young people as human beings, to foster opportunities for all without discrimination, to help them become citizens who will be able to play a full role in their local communities, in their nation and in the world. One could draw the conclusion that the role of a teacher is an awesome one and could further accept the view that teachers are called because teaching is a vocation from God. I do not wish to debate that view, except to say that even if you were born to teach, there will be room for training and professional growth and development.

What are the characteristics of a good or quality teacher? Again there are different views on how to define teacher quality. The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Q.E.C.D.) definitions, tend to suggest that a quality teacher is someone who has:

- Knowledge of substantive areas and content.
- Pedagogic skill, including the acquisition and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies.
- Reflection and ability to be self-critical – the hallmark of teacher professionalism
- Empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others
- Managerial competence as teachers assumes a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom

They further argue that these dimensions of teacher quality should not be seen in terms of narrow behavioural competencies, but more in terms of dispositions. Teacher quality should be regarded as a holistic concept, i.e. as a gestalt of qualities rather than as a discrete set of measurable behaviours to be developed

independently from each other. The integration of competencies across these dimensions of teacher quality is thought to mark the outstanding teacher.

Another interesting approach to describe the good teacher is the ten competencies identified by Perrenoud (1999). These are:

- Organizing student learning opportunities.
- Managing student learning progression.
- Dealing with student heterogeneity.
- Developing student commitment to working and learning
- Working in teams
- Participating in school curriculum and organization development
- Promoting parent and community commitment to school
- Using new technologies in daily practice.
- Tackling professional duties and ethical dilemmas
- Managing own professional development.

Quality teachers can be regarded from different perspectives. For many students, quality teachers operate in a fair system where their skills are awarded and where their achievements are acknowledged. For example Scottish students in Grades 2/3 thought that a good teacher is very clever, doesn't shout, helps you every day, is not bossy, has faith in you, is funny, is patient, is good at work, tells you clearly what to do, helps you with mistakes, marks your work, helps you to read, helps you with spelling and has got courage (MacBeth et al., 1996, p.55). For parents, quality means a school where the students are safe and where they can learn in a stimulating environment, and the good teacher will ensure this. For many teachers, quality is a school where the students want to learn and where the working conditions are good and again, the good teacher will be found in this school.

I rather like this comment by a practicing teacher in response to concerns over who is a highly qualified teacher. She states... maybe a highly qualified teacher

might need to know that... always placing demands and structures on children is not the most effective way to keep them focused or organized and just maybe a highly qualified teacher needs to be able to reach out with some playfulness of his or her own soul to the souls of the children in the room, so that when peace arrives, it is peace of free people, not the peace of an occupied territory. I guess, she continued, that's the real problem with policy briefs and government mandates and outcome measurements regarding teacher quality is that ... nobody has yet figured out how to make a policy, or how to mandate, or really – how to quantifiably measure the thing that most defines the essence of a quality teacher: a great soul. It is important to keep in mind that no one is born to be an outstanding teacher, but everyone can, because good teaching is a result of education, training and experience.

We come to a crucial question and this is: How can teachers improve quality? In this regard there are three issues that we will be focusing on:

- Quality Awareness
- Professional Ethics
- Professional Freedom

QUALITY AWARENESS AND SELF-EVALUATION

Of general importance for teachers' ability to improve the quality of education is the ability to reflect on their own teaching critically. Examine the methods used and look for alternative ways of teaching. What we are talking about here is building a culture of 'quality awareness' among teachers while providing them with the necessary skills, resources and opportunities to improve their teaching methodology. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate their own teaching and its results. Evaluation in this case is a general term used to describe any activity where the quality of provision is the subject of systematic study. However, there are several risks in relation to present developments in the area of evaluation. One main risk is that evaluation will be focused too much on easily measurable school achievement, without taking into consideration, the

complexity of the reality in schools. There is also a risk that teachers will be side-stepped in the evaluation process and made only objects of the process. In order to make evaluation a tool which teachers can use to improve the quality of education, there is a need to find and highlight alternative methods for evaluation which allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which give teachers a possibility to be part of the process.

PROFESSIONAL FREEDOM

The professional freedom of the teacher is of crucial importance in developing quality in education. Professional freedom does not mean that the teacher can do whatever he or she likes, but that the teacher, who knows the students, is the person best equipped to decide which methods to use in order to create an optional learning situation. This approach is consistent with Article 61 in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers which states that: The teaching profession should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties. Since teachers are particularly qualified to judge the teaching aids and methods most suitable for their pupils, they should be given the essential role in the choice and the adoption of teaching material, the selection of textbooks and application of teaching methods within the framework of approved programmes, and with the assistance of the educational authorities. (UNESCO, 1996).

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

This is an important issue in determining teacher quality. Teaching is becoming a more and more complex task. Teachers deal with professional ethical questions in different ways in various countries. One way for teachers to set standards themselves is to agree within the profession on a code of ethics. Such a document is usually a set of basic rules for teachers to follow in order to guarantee certain standards of a profession. Regardless of how these things are dealt with in a country, it is critical that the provisions are consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The professional development of teachers is a key guarantee of quality education and must be linked to all phases of teacher education and educational research. In order to improve the education of teachers worldwide, education authorities, government and intergovernmental organizations must ensure that teachers receive a good initial teacher education at university level to prepare them for their work as teachers.

Yes! Everybody can teach but they must undergo training. (Darling-Hammond, 1997) posited the view that the highest quality teachers, those most capable of helping students learn, have deep mastery of both their subject matter and pedagogy. The preparation that teachers receive before beginning their work in the classroom varies around the world and more so within the least developed countries. All teachers' education must contain four components; methodology, pedagogy, practice and curriculum areas. The presence of all four components is however essential to achieving a balance between general theory and professionally oriented training. To make a profession attractive, it is essential to offer good salaries and conditions of service as well as provide the appropriate resources to get the job done. These resources must include and embrace the new technologies. Teachers of necessity will have to be trained to use the new technologies in a way that will enhance their competencies and effectiveness as teachers.

In order to improve the status of all teachers worldwide, education authorities and governments must ensure that teachers have a salary comparable with other professions requiring the same level of qualifications and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Teachers have a key position in all kinds of education, more so quality education. No measure is possible to meaningfully improve education if teachers are not thought of. Training for a stronger teaching force requires the provision of

ongoing, in-service and professional development. In a world which is undergoing rapid change, teachers must have opportunities for life-long learning. However, the society must support the efforts of teachers in their quest to become the best. This support must be seen in terms of how teachers are treated and compensated. Teachers in turn must ensure that they are constantly expanding their horizons with the view of improving their effectiveness. This challenge is not insurmountable but in a real sense, will become the ideal for which every good teacher will strive to become better each day.

It is my sincere wish that those of us who teach will not only be seen as qualified, but more so that we will earn the great honour of being a teacher of quality.

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