



# Quality Education and Neglected Trained Teachers in Liberia: A Dilemma of Efficient Human Resource Development

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## POETIC PROLOGUE

### A Tribute to My Fallen Professors, Mentors, Advisors and Educators Worldwide *Meteorites, Fallen Stars of The Constellation:*

*Meteorites, Fallen Stars of the Constellation,  
You once belonged to the Galaxy  
Which illuminated distant places and locations.  
You once belonged to the Constellation  
Which led many out of the darkness of illiteracy.  
You emitted light,  
Which provided the path to advanced civilization.  
Yet, gravity has pulled you beneath the surface of the Earth  
Professors, fallen Meteorites of the Galaxy,  
You made great educators, thinkers, state, and international actors.  
People upon whom society reposes its most delicate responsibility,  
The education and development of its youthful population.  
Your tasks were performed with honesty and marked efficiency.  
You sheltered when they roved.  
You fed when they hungered.  
You poured when they thirsted.  
Meteorites, fallen stars of the Constellation,  
You energized when they fatigued.  
You motivated when they shayed.  
You stimulated when they withdrew*

*Professors, fallen stars of the Galaxy,  
You rescued humanity from drowning into the state of illiteracy and ignorance.*

*Memories of your positive impacts remain fresh forever.*

*Vanishing physically does not erode your enormous contributions to humanity.*

*Fallen Meteorites of the Constellation, aurevoir*

*Fading mentors of all ages, adios.*

*Mothers and fathers "In loco Parentis," obligardo.*

**A Tribute to the United Nations, European Union, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, International Organizations, and all Peace-Loving Peoples of the World Who Sacrificed Their Lives and Resources to Restore Peace and Sanity to Liberia  
*When Mama Liberia Went Wild:***

*When Mama Liberia went wild,*

*Some of her sons and daughters became vile.*

*For their acts were like the cane,*

*Which made us suffer pain.*

*Then philanthropists made a way*

*To save the day*

*From ruins and decadence.*

*To defend our independence.*

*All was done,*

*Peace was won.*

*With the Lone Star*

*Shinning bright and far,*

*We can strive for unity*

*To protect our sovereignty.*

*Now, let us strive*

*To avoid any national strife.*

*Oh, Mama Liberia,*

*You are still our pillar.*

*To us you are so great.  
Custodian of our fate,  
Never despair.  
For you will repair  
The broken hearts,  
The wounded parts.  
Help shape your children's attitudes  
To avoid being destitute.  
"All hail, Liberia hail."*

**Dedicated to Enlightened Civilization and Egalitarianism**  
***The Girl Too:***

*The girl too has a purpose  
Like her male counterpart.  
Not meant for early marriage.  
Or any form of abuse  
She possesses all the attributes  
To contribute to societal life  
Suppression amounts to societal stagnation.  
She is educable and withstands the test of time.  
She detests early marriage.  
Assertive, she refuses help for sex  
She rejects sex for help.  
The girl too, is not alien to skilled jobs  
Lest to mention effective leadership roles  
The girl too, can kindle society.  
Her roles go beyond mere motherhood.  
She assuages the afflicted.  
She feeds the hungry.*

*The girl too, possesses the art of statecraft.*

*The stage belongs to all  
Prevention, exclusion, exploitation  
Are just but denial.  
Wake up, people of civility  
From your slumber  
Support both girls and boys  
For they both are societal assets.*

**Dedicated to all Liberians and Posterity**

***The Liberia Dream:***

*The Liberia Dream, a perpetual optimism  
Which sets in motion true patriotism.  
For once she led the struggle for African Independence  
To restore continental self-confidence.  
Once suppressed by European Colonial Domination  
To exercise self-determination.  
With sovereignty and national unity  
Liberia provides for creativity.  
She always plays host  
To place the disadvantaged on the right post.  
With her, whoever seeks freedom  
Shall never fall into the dungeon.  
Mama Liberia will never fall prey to a pit  
Meant to destroy her weight.  
She possesses the will power  
To fulfil her development goals forever.  
The Liberia Dream detests disunity.  
It calls for national unity*

*Which ignites brotherhood.  
The Liberia Dream flushes out divisive tendencies  
And brings about shared responsibilities.  
The Liberia Dream, enlightenment for posterity  
Who will forever cherish national unity.*

## INRODUCTION

Teacher Education is an expensive and intensive resource exhausting and time-consuming exercise that all civilized nations undertake. The goal is simple –no nation develops without an adequately educated population. The attainment of this universal goal is dependent upon the quality of Teacher Education Programs the world over. Because teachers are concerned with citizens of the future, life-chances, social inclusion, and quality of children’s’ experiences in the present, they can never avoid value questions; because they deal with constant flow of dilemmas, they can never avoid the need to exercise professional judgment (Pollard et. al, 2006).

The importance of teachers is demonstrated in all spheres of human civilizations, as the demand for diversified specializations is society’s guard post. Moore (2007) has divided the role of the teacher into three broad categories as ‘Instructional Expert, Manager and Counselor.’ Similarly, the Professional Ethics and Behavior Domain of the Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia (2008) states that the “teacher uses guidance and counseling skills to solve problems in the school and community and serves as a model of good citizenship, following the rules of the Ministry of Education and the laws of the country.”

With these inherent, outstanding attributes and qualities of especially trained teachers, interested stakeholders in the Liberian Education System have all reasons to deplore the precarious and degrading conditions of neglected trained teachers in the country.

For example, many In-Service Teachers are forced to abandon their instructional engagements to seek greener pastures elsewhere due to the Ministry of Education (MOE) inability to adjust or increase their salaries following the upgrading of their professional levels. As Pollard et al. (2006) generalized, teachers’ values have considerable social significance because of the responsibilities of their professional position.

At the same time, these In-Service Teachers are also plagued with unwarranted retirement shortly after undergoing their professional training or education. Still, many Pre-Service Teachers are unemployed and left to make their way through society supervening rigorous training. This has given the ground to non-trained individuals to gravitate into schools as teachers and school administrators with no pedagogue-content orientations. Hence, there is a common saying in Liberia that “When the Qualified are not available, the Available are qualified.”

Considered in this debate are also factors that hinder the smooth conduct of quality education in Liberia such as academic malpractices, weaknesses in the Education System; the importance of teacher training or education, teacher employment, deployment, and retention, instructional supervision, and planning, all in observance of educational regulatory processes and

implementation which have psychological implications. This can be explained by Organizational Psychology which focuses on work motivation, job satisfaction, leadership, organizational climate, and related topics (Weiten, 1995).

### **POLICY VERSES IMPLEMENTATION**

According to the mandate of the William V.S. Tubman School of Teacher Training engendered in 1947, now William V.S. Tubman College of Education, University of Liberia, “the college was established to contribute to the scientific development of education in the nation by preparing Pre-Service Teachers for the Elementary and Secondary Schools. In addition, it is to assist in the professional improvement of In-Service Teachers and collaborate with the Ministry of Education in Educational Planning and Programs for the nation” (University of Liberia 102<sup>nd</sup> Combined Commencement Convocation Souvenir Program, 2022).

Invariably, the incapacity of the Ministry of Education and other essential institutions and organizations to absorb and adequately pay trained teachers has led to teachers’ apathy, attrition, fatigue, moonlighting, burnout, and double-dipping. The repercussions translate in schools—both rural or urban being understaffed, under-supervised, poorly administered, and neglected. After all, the bottom line of recruiting, selecting, training, paying, and appraising workers is largely one of optimizing employee performance (Dessler, 1990c).

Compromisingly, private, and faith-based institutions for the most part hire, subordinate, and underpay these dashing trained teachers because the teachers have no options. These institutions on the other hand, sometimes refuse to employ qualified teachers because remuneration must be commensurate with their qualifications—something considered “budgetary constraints or limitations.”

In some cases, communities construct public or community schools and request Government or Ministry of Education to assign teachers thereto during elaborate dedicatory ceremonies, when livestock lose their lives. The government officials concerned would advise the community to hire volunteer teachers who will be placed on payroll in the “shortest possible time.”

No sooner had the officials left than their promise go into oblivion, leaving the school and volunteers vulnerable. The community then bears the burden of upkeeping the teachers, who may subsequently exploit the situation by collecting illegal fees, sexually harassing students-exchanging grades for sex or sex for grades among others.

To dilute the situation for instance, other institutions or employers, majority of whom have no formal Teacher Training or Education style themselves, their spouses, children, relatives, high school and college dropouts as supervisors, principals, vice principals for instruction, registrars, who for that matter lack pedagogue-content and educational supervisory orientations among others. What then is their purpose for supervising teachers—teachers’ presence, absence, or substance? Teachers’ substance translates into their “ability to prepare and execute professional teaching plans in accordance with the content of the curriculum” (Karngebea & Kennedy, 2022). Are the untrained teachers knowledgeable about this? Of course, no! Their presence or absence is what counts.

At times, school boards, proprietors and proprietresses warn, suspend, threaten to dismiss, or dismiss qualified teachers who vow to be strict on executing administrative and instructional

conventions or policies such as students' attendance, grading of course works among others. The reason is simple: Based on the commercial nature of these schools, there is a high tendency of not wanting to lose students. All the same, they set standards which require teachers not to award grades below 70, lest enrollment declines and cash profits become marginal.

In effect, teachers and school administrators, trained or untrained, become inept, and therefore get involved in what President William Richard Tolbert (1975) referred to as "NONFEASANCE, MISFEASANCE, and MALFEASANCE." Defining these words, Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Since 1828), reflected in Karngbea (2023), proceeds in the following manner: NONFEASANCE---failure to do what ought to be done; MISFEASANCE---the performance of a lawful action in an illegal or improper manner; and MALFEASANCE---wrongdoing or misconduct especially by a public official. Ultimately, these unwholesome practices are rampant in all spheres of public life because proper education, skills, attitudes, values, and information are not inculcated into the learners due to the unpreparedness of the personnel who man the education system.

In this regard, the Liberia Parent-Teacher Association Training Manual (2008), describes the purpose of education under the theme "Service Learning" (paraphrased) infra: Service Learning gives students the opportunity to share and practice what they have learnt to real life experiences to support and improve their community. In addition, it gives youth the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them take up lead roles in the community for advocacy, civic responsibilities, social, personal growth and development. Moreover, Service Learning obtains that young people help to determine and meet real, defined school or community needs.

In so doing, it becomes imperative on the part of the education system to inculcate into the students the importance and skills of Civic Education to broaden their horizon on the preservation or conservation of their heritage. The idea of Civic Education comes in because the youthful population needs to be informed and empowered with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them make informed choices and decisions on issues that affect their daily life, which may be cultural, economic, political, or social. Hence, the reintroduction or teaching of Civics in our schools is the most effective and safer way of promoting Civic Education and a civilized society.

In contrast, the society is plagued with corruption---i.e., nepotism, favoritism, and connectivism, not only in Liberia, but also in many developing countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. The consequential impact conduces to the ineffectiveness of the Civil Service and societal underdevelopment because quality education is either denied, commercialized, compromised, or neglected, and not considered a force for human capacity building and transformation. In general, the civil Service in Africa is weak, inefficient, highly politicized, and often either ethnic dominated or fractured by the concentration of different ethnic groups in different parts of the administration (UNDESA, 2000).

As she put it, Indira Gandhi, reflected in STRIDE-IGNOU/P.O. IT (1999), caveated: "Education is a liberating force, and in our age, it is a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth or other circumstances." In like manner, John F. Kennedy (1963) cautioned humanity: "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot protect the few who are rich." A free society no doubt depicts a democratic society in which education is a priority, thus providing for the diversified needs of a nation in terms of human resource development.

According to Article 26, Sections One and Two, reflected in (MoE, 1999), "Everyone has the right to education, which shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human right and fundamental freedom. Education shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious."

One thing is certain, beautiful education policies are often frustrated by reneged implementation in developing countries of which Liberia is no exception. For instance, here is what the Liberian Education Reform Act (2011), offers in part in its preamble: "Whereas, the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, recognizing the vital role assigned individual citizens for social, economic, and political well-being of Liberia enunciates as one of the General Principles of National Policy of the Government of Liberia that there should be equal access to educational opportunities and facilitates for all citizens and residents to the extent of "available resources" and that emphasis shall be placed on mass education of Liberians and the elimination of illiteracy."

As regards "available resources," Liberia is rich in natural resources among which are diamond, gold, iron ore, rubber, timber, forest, land and swamps for agriculture among others. The issue rests with our national leaders who manage or mismanage these resources. In his inaugural address in January 2018, President George Manneh Weah said, "I will make sure that government resources (money) do not end up in the pockets of public officials." Interestingly, Former Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Mr. Nathaniel Mcgail, President George Weah's closest confidant and US Treasury Department's money laundering indictee, remarked at a political rally in Gbarnga City in 2022 that "the money government officials steal is used to build Liberia and not carried outside of the country."

What an irony and contradiction to a presidential policy statement at inauguration! A holistic approach to good governance requires that public officials be held responsible and accountable not only for administrative procedures (following rules and regulations and keeping away from illegal activities), but also for the ethical and moral consequences of their deeds (Olowu & Sako, 2002).

Meanwhile, in the author's view, the phrase "elimination of illiteracy" is an overstatement. He therefore reduces the phrase to the "minimization of illiteracy" because relevant, appropriate resources are not committed to education. For example, the question of employment, deployment, remuneration, and retention of trained pre-service teachers commensurable with their qualifications remains unaddressed; as most of them have become commercial motorcyclists, street sellers, chain sawyers, plank sellers, and private security guards. These petit commercial activities existing within the Private Sector need government protection and promotion. As the major engine of economic growth, and hence the creation of wealth and employment, the Private Sector creates the necessary conditions for sustainable development (UNDESA, 2000).

Aside from other universities and colleges of Teacher Education including the Rural Teachers Training Institutes in Liberia, the College of Education at the University of Liberia graduates hundreds of pre-service teachers every year who are not absorbed by the Ministry of Education's employment apparatus. Furthermore, In-service teachers graduate and are denied salary increment or adjustment, and to add insult to injury, they are unwarrantedly retired with little, delayed disbursement of a percentage of an already low salary—the author is a clear victim! His take-home salary was 36,000 Liberian Dollars at the rate of 150 LD to one United States Dollar.



Now he receives 11,000 LD at retirement following 41 years of service. "The Quest for Quality Education in the Face of Neglected Trained Teachers in Liberia: A Dilemma of Efficient Human Resource Development"

### **INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND SUPERVISION**

It is important to recognize that the question of Instructional Planning and Supervision is sine qua non to the effective conduct of education anywhere and everywhere around the globe. Supervision, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Since 1828), is defined as the act of critically watching and directing the activities and actions of members of a team or work group in an organization or institution. It entails superintendence, guidance, regulations, governance, controlling and directing a workforce for the achievement of desired goals (Dessler, 1990c). Instructional Supervision therefore places premium on Instructional Planning and implementation of the lesson. Planning on the other hand, calls to play the development of a sequence of steps and events that lead to the achievement of desired goals.

This accordingly brings to spotlight the significance of Instructional Planning from the points of view of the teacher and school administrator. Thus, Instructional Planning is important as posited by the Liberia Ministry of Education Teacher's Handbook (1984), paraphrased in Karngbea and Kennedy (2022) in the following manner:

#### The Administrator's Point of View

- i. To obtain evidence and evaluate the teacher's ability to prepare and execute a professional teaching plan.
- ii. To evaluate the teacher's ability to arrange curricular contents in coherent manner.
- iii. To avail the lesson plan to a substitute teacher for instruction.

#### The Teacher's Point of View

- i. To prepare oneself in terms of content, objectives, materials, strategies, and time of presentation, thus avoiding unstructured instruction.
- ii. To use the plan as evidence that it was prepared and executed.
- iii. To ensure content coherence, and to win respect from colleagues or peers, administrators, students, and other interested parties.
- iv. To use the plan as a future reference to reinforce its strengths and improve on weaknesses revealed in the previous plan and presentation.

These mutual administrative and instructional positions held by the teacher and school administrator depict the single most beneficial relationship that both instructional actors use as their guard post to enhance students' learning. Notably, this symbiotic interaction reflects three levels of instructional supervisory engagements or dialogues namely Pre-observation Conference, Classroom Observation and Post-observation Conference. These conferences, when conducted professionally, result in trust and confidence building, and ultimately the accentuation of instruction and students' achievement.

In essence, many teachers are seeking to change their practices to support teaching for critical thinking to challenge the students not just to memorize, but to question, examine, create, solve, interpret, and debate the materials in their courses (Open Society Foundation -London and Open Society Initiative -West Africa, 2008). According to Dr. Corrine Anderson (2008), captured in

Karngbeae and Kennedy (2022), "a good teaching habit does not have national boundaries or international peripheries."

Note however, that the observation conferences are especially important since the teachers in question are challenged because they are either unqualified or untrained. For the teachers in this category, these conferences are in themselves staff development driven. The fact remains: The Instructional Supervisor or Vice Principal for Instruction who happens to be the technical arm of the school, is there to help the teacher grow professionally and not to police him or her. As it is, instruction, a derivative of the curriculum, is the central nerve of any educational system.

Pin-pointedly, the purpose of Classroom Observation is to see the various interpersonal interactions between the instructor, instructional aides, if any, classroom volunteers, and those interactions occurring among students in the classroom (USAID/MOE, 2008).

Meanwhile, the trained teacher and instructional supervisor, versed in pedagogue-content knowledge, skills, and attitudes are presumed to possess what Borich (2011) calls the "Three Powers of the Teacher-i.e., Legitimate Power, Expert Power, and Referent Power." Describing these powers, he asserts (paraphrased), that the "Legitimate Power" gives the teacher the legal authority to take over as leader and manager of the class during instruction and any other interactions involving academic activities associated thereto. The "Expert Power" translates into the possession of relevant information, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the capacity to select appropriate instructional strategies and materials or aids and classroom management skills which entail effective communication, physical dexterity, proximity control among others.

The "Referent Power" calls for the teacher's flexibility, but frankness; strict to the point, that is. This power requires the teacher to always be available, accessible, approachable, and accountable—he/she is "In loco parentis," not a Boogieman to be feared by anyone, someone, or everyone (Karngbeae & Kennedy, 2022). By "In loco parentis," a Latin phrase, is meant that the "teacher is in the place of parents," and should always address the concerns, interests, and grievances of students whenever the need arises.

Anything to the contrary creates a disequilibrium in students' motivation and learning, thereby incapacitating their enthusiasm and desire for excellence and advancement. Adversely, the untrained or unqualified teacher may not possess the teacher's powers described supra.

The question remains: Are unqualified or untrained schoolteachers and administrators capable of running an effective school system? Of course, no. They may or may not even have the passion for teaching, but because they are unemployed at the time, they find teaching to be what Dr. Seth Bansa (1984), called a "Revolving Door Profession." This means that they spend uncommitted time in the classroom and exit later when they find windows of opportunities outside of the field of education. This is one of the factors that has impotentiated not only the Liberian School System but other systems in developing countries. To hit the nail on the head, sub-standard schools have mushroomed to quench the commercial appetites of proprietors, proprietresses, and boards of private and faith-based schools and institutions.

Consequently, the spillover effect is that students become victims of content omissions and gaps due to teachers' lack of pedagogue-content knowledge and skills, coupled with moonlighting, double-dipping, or burnout with no sincere commitment to duty. Hence, massive failure in the

West African Examinations, standardized and placement examinations administered by entities and institutions of higher learning become the talk of the time.

As President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2015c), put it, "The Liberian Education System is a Mess." And to remedy the "Mess," in the author's view, both male and female learners must be considered as equals in all spheres of their educational sojourns. Thus, concerning female education in Liberia, the learned Professor Edward Wilmot Blyden of Liberia College, now University of Liberia, during whose days (1860s), women were not offered the opportunity to acquire college education, took a stance.

Strongly believing that women deserved the opportunity to acquire college education, he wrote: "I trust that arrangement will be made for girls in our country to be admitted to this college. I can't see why our sisters should not receive the same general culture as we (men) do. I think the progress of the country will be more rapid and permanent when girls receive the same training as the boys; and our women, besides appreciating the intellectual labors of their husbands and brothers, will also share the pleasure of intellectual pursuit" (Reeves, 1995). No doubt, the author intends his Prologic Poem "The Girl Too" to reinforce Blyden's dream for Liberian women.

### **ACADEMIC MALPRACTICES**

One of the worst practices that is eating up the subsistence or fabric of the current Liberian School System and promoting the "Mess" is the introduction and practice of a syndicate called "Flexibility Fee" which is collected from students before or during the administration of the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. This practice is in some cases accompanied or preceded by "taking examinees on camp" to await the examinations, where test copies are smuggled and surreptitiously responded to. Any teacher refusing to "go on camp" is considered renegade. He or she may face suspension, dismissal, or experience salary deduction and so on.

Furthermore, during the administration of the examinations, subject specialists are hired and confined to facilities nearby and provided copies of the examinations, wherein they extract the correct responses, send them to the proctors who distribute same to the examinees. These practices are common among public, private, and faith-based institutions in Liberia who are competing for academic excellence or rather academic dishonesty.

Disappointingly, the "Flexibility" beneficiaries, the students, that is, enter institutions of higher learning with very weak backgrounds especially in English and Mathematics, not to mention the Natural Sciences. Performing poorly in their academic pursuit, and frustrated, they drop out or sell themselves to "vote-seeking or vote-ragging politicians" thereby taking wrong political decisions in their quest for "immediate gratifications." Lamenting such a situation, the Nobel Prize Winner, Professor Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde Soyinka decries: "Only in Africa will thieves be regrouping to loot again and the youths whose future is being stolen will be celebrating it..."

Considering the resources-human, financial, material, time, and distance committed to the training of teachers, this study questions the rationale for the Ministry of Education not adequately employing Pre-Service Teachers on the one hand, and retiring In-Service Teachers shortly following graduation, and not adjusting or increasing their salaries following completion of their studies on the other. "The Quest for Quality Education in the Face of Neglected Trained Teachers in Liberia: A Dilemma of Effective Human Resource Development"

Put another way, it has become perennial since the inception of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Administration dating 2005 to present that teacher—both Pre-service and In-service, following their pursuit of required courses of study find themselves either unemployed, underemployed, denied salary adjustment (increment), or unwarrantedly retired. These teachers are mostly products of government-run institutions, private, faith-based, or corporate universities and colleges of teacher training and education. All the same, these teachers are beneficiaries of government tuition-free programs, subsidies, or permission to remain on payroll while pursuing their studies. They all benefit one way or the other from government or societal resources.

Theoretically supporting the importance of Teacher Education, the National Professional Standards for Teachers in Namibia (2006) postulates that “Other than economic benefits, an effective education and training system has well-documented broader benefits that are crucial to development –poverty reduction and equity, improved absorptive capacity for social services, participatory democracy, and good governance.”

In like manner, a Liberian Education Policy Document asserts that “Whereas the Liberian Government realizes that education facilitates poverty reduction and is essential for the development of individual citizens and national growth, and that it equips people with the relevant skills to participate in essential economic and social activities of the nation, a new Education Law is hereby enacted (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011).

### **SOME WEAKNESSES IN THE LIBERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The first and foremost limitation in the Liberian Education System is the hiring or employment of unqualified or untrained schoolteachers and administrators who respectively lack the skills in deconstructing and delivering the National School Curricula on the one hand, and their inability to professionally supervise instruction on the other. Inversely, the trained teacher can plan daily lessons with clear objectives as well as plan for the medium and long terms, thus breaking down the curriculum into meaningful topics according to the instructional time available (Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia, 2008).

Thus, the inability of any teacher to demonstrate an understanding of what Moore (2007), refers to as Pre-instructional Skills, Instructional Skills, and Post Instructional Skills renders him or her unfit for teaching in any school. The teacher ought to be an embodiment of the “Competencies” under the Five Domains of the Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia (2008), namely Knowledge, Teaching Skills, Classroom Management, Assessment and Evaluation and Professional Ethics and Behavior. To claim international attention, interest, and critique about the Liberian Education System, the author has, by courtesy of the Ministry of Education certified-copied the Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia infra:

#### **Domain 1: Knowledge Description**

Knowledge refers to the content knowledge, the technical knowledge, and practical understanding a teacher needs in order to carry out his or her duties.

The teacher...

- a. has knowledge of the content and a thorough understanding of the subject matter he or she teaches.
- b. has thorough knowledge of the National Ministry of Education Curriculum and applies this effectively in teaching, making connections across subject matters where applicable.
- c. has basic knowledge of the Philosophy of Education in Liberia.

- d. knows and applies the rules and policies of the Ministry of Education.
- e. has thorough knowledge of the Constitution of Liberia.
- f. has knowledge of theories of child development and child psychology including psychosocial issues and applies these in teaching.
- g. has knowledge of approaches to teaching and learning and related methodologies and applies these in the classroom as appropriate.
- h. has knowledge of the heritage, values, customs, and traditions of Liberian Society and how these affect individual students.
- i. is aware of the importance of integrating psychological and vocational life skills into teaching to promote self-responsibility in students and help each student achieve his or her personal best in life.
- j. has sound knowledge of the English Language in spoken and written forms and is able to transfer that knowledge to students.

### **Domain 2: Teaching Skills Description**

Teaching Skills refers to the processes, strategies, and techniques of planning and implementation of teaching and learning.

The teacher...

- a. is able to plan daily lessons with clear objectives as well as plan for the medium and long range.
- b. is able to break down the curriculum into meaningful topics according to the instructional time available.
- c. knows how to teach the basic skills of the core curriculum and helps students who have challenges in these areas.
- d. is clear and comprehensible in the presentation of information, gives clear instructions and checks the learning of students.
- e. makes learning enjoyable and challenging for students and sets high expectations in a spirit of friendly competition.
- f. uses relevant and appropriate teaching aids and makes use of available modern technology to enhance learning.
- g. uses student-centered methods, extra-curricular activities, sports, play and drama to enhance better learning and child development.
- h. is able to make learning relevant and meaningful to students and relate it to their everyday lives by using real life stories, local examples, materials, aids and resources.

### **Domain 3: Classroom Management Description**

Classroom Management refers to the strategies and implementation means used by the teacher to maintain a conducive teaching and learning environment. It includes classroom setting as well as all other arrangements to ensure proper behavior and interactions that enhance learning.

The teacher...

- a. makes sure that maximum time is used on learning by getting and keeping students' attention, and by establishing routines to manage the class.
- b. possesses good communication skills, presents new materials clearly, gives clear instructions and checks for understanding and output.
- c. uses suitable counseling and disciplinary procedures and techniques of conflict resolution to deal with problems both in and out of the classroom.
- d. Ensure active participation by all students in the class through effective questioning techniques and the use of individual, pair, and group work.

- e. creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom conducive to learning and motivates students through appropriate supportive actions.
- f. ensures that the physical environment of the classroom is as conducive to learning as possible.
- g. teaches each individual student in the class taking into account individual differences in learning styles, abilities, ages, needs, skills, activities, prior knowledge, psychological needs and behavior, and manages large, mixed-ability and multi-level classes effectively.

#### **Domain: Student Assessment and Evaluation Description**

Student Assessment and Evaluation refers to the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating information about students' performance using a range of tools to indicate students' levels of achievement and to determine and improve the effectiveness of instruction.

The teacher...

- a. follows students' progress and monitors improvement over time as a result of instruction.
- b. is able to design appropriate, valid and reliable assessment instruments.
- c. involves students in evaluating their own work, and interprets and communicates grades to parents, guardians, and school authorities through report cards or grade sheets.
- d. gives students frequent constructive feedbacks on their performance in a timely manner.
- e. assesses and evaluates students in a fair and consistent manner, regardless of individual differences, between and amongst them and marks work and returns it in a timely fashion.
- f. adheres to the Ministry of Education policy on promotion of students and composition of classes.
- g. monitors students' progress through the setting of quizzes, assignments, class participation and tests (written or oral) and sets remedial work where necessary.
- h. plans, conducts, and administers valid and reliable tests.
- i. keeps accurate records of grades to make decisions on students' progress.
- j. makes informal assessment of students in the classroom on a regular basis.

#### **Domain 5: Profession Ethics and Behavior Description**

Professional Ethics and Behavior refers to teachers' code of behavior as they carry out their duties. It includes good citizenship, dress code and the teacher's ability to interact with others and society at large. This code of conduct should be reflected in all the activities carried out by the teacher.

The teacher...

- a. contributes to the life of the community and society at large and maintains good working relationship with students, parents, and other staff and the school community.
- b. is consistently aware of the importance of psychosocial issues such as ills in society and the home like rape, child abuse, forced labor at home, and denial of access to learning facilities, and takes account of these in teaching.
- c. reflects on his or her own practices in order to continue to improve and continuously seeks opportunities for professional development.
- d. establishes and maintains a level of effective collaboration between and among fellow teachers.
- e. recognizes and respects the cultural, religious, and personal differences between and among students, parents, and members of the community, valuing their diversities
- f. takes steps to address and resolve conflicts and problems that develop in the classroom and the community.

- g. is a model of good citizenship following the rules of the Ministry of Education and the laws of the country and acts a moral role model for his or her students and community by being appropriately dressed, well-disciplined and patient minded.
- h. addresses issues of child protection, matters concerned with health and safety and HIV/AIDS, STIs, Substance Abuse (drugs, smoking, and alcohol) and violence.
- i. uses guidance and counseling principles in the school and community and helps students overcome challenges confronting them.
- j. plans and executes his or her duties with diligence, commitment, dedication, and fairness.

The Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia, Code of Conduct for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia and the Philosophy of Liberian Education are used to inform Teacher Education Curricula, especially at the Rural Teacher Training Institutes and the College of Education, University of Liberia. This is a clear manifestation that both Pre-service and In-service Teachers are well groomed to carry out instructional and administrative functions in the Liberian School System as opposed to high schoolers or graduates, college dropouts, and those from different fields of study other than education.

Hence, the author has used the term “Pedagogue-content” in this discourse to describe the trained teachers’ instructional and administrative competencies in both content or subject matter, backed by the skills in selecting and using appropriate teaching objectives, strategies, aids, and classroom management techniques. Instructional objectives, strategies, aids, classroom management and evaluation are derivatives of instructional planning, which is itself an offshoot of the ‘curriculum,’ the central nerve of all educational systems (Karngbea & Kennedy, 2022).

In short, trained, qualified teachers and school administrators ought to be employed and deployed in the entire school system either as public-school teachers while some are government subsidies to private and faith-based institutions. They can demonstrate understanding of child development and psychology, perceptual styles, learning styles and other guidelines and principles governing teaching and learning. Effective headmasters are firm and purposeful, appoint effective teachers, create consensus and unity of purpose; they share and delegate responsibilities and involve all teachers in decision-making; they are ‘leading professionals’ with an understanding of classrooms and how teaching and learning can be improved (Pollard et al, 2006).

In her FORWARD message contained in the “Training Modules for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia” (2014), the then Minister of Education, Dr. Etmonia David Tarpeh had this to say: “The Ministry of Education has initiated several reform measures... Effective Governance, Improved Educational Leadership at all levels, Establishment of Functional County Offices, Recruitment of Qualified Teachers and Staff to improve the quality of services. The development of the Code of Conduct for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia is one such measures undertaken to build a disciplined teaching force that is professional.”

Is this a mere, unfulfilled policy statement, as hundreds of trained teachers from the colleges and universities of teacher education and rural teacher training institutes across the county languish because of unemployment? Policy Verses Implementation. Hence, “The Quest for Quality Education in the Face of Neglected Teachers in Liberia: A Dilemma of Effective Human Resource Development.”

### **The philosophy of Liberian Education: Partly Ironical to Existing Realities?**

Still, another beautiful Liberian Education Policy Document, "The Philosophy of Liberian Education Sector (2011 and beyond)," is also certified-copied in acknowledgement of the courtesy of the Ministry of Education infra:

1. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Liberian Education System will provide equal access to quality education for all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, creed, gender, and special needs, religious or political affiliation.
2. We believe that the foundation of this educational system is based on the following Core Values: integrity, accountability, commitment to excellence, transparency, diligence, and moral rectitude.
3. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Liberia Education System will subscribe to the Liberian Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which posits (consider, regard) education as a fundamental human right.
4. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education System will promote the health and well-being of its people and contribute to sustained social and economic development.
5. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Liberian Education System will provide opportunities for its people to be technologically literate and lifelong learners.
6. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Liberian Education System will provide a caring, nurturing, and secure learning environment.
7. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Liberian Education System will prepare its people to become productive contributors to nation building through workforce development.
8. We believe that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education System will function on a decentralized administrative structure to ensure effective and efficient delivery of quality education for all people.

While as a Liberian I am not pessimistic about this educational philosophy, I am concerned about the irony it presents in part: For instance, "...will provide a caring, nurturing, and secure learning environment." Many schools in rural and urban Liberia---ie. Public, private and faith-based are conducted in mischief structures with no ideal furniture or seating, instructional materials, toilet facilities, safe drinking water, recreational spaces among others, lest to mention trained teachers and school administrators. Another irony: "...will provide equal access to quality education for all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, creed, gender, and special needs, religious or political affiliation."

Many schools are either understaffed, run by incompetent administrators, instructed by unqualified individuals while the "real" teachers, trained for the job are neglected, unemployed, unduly retired, denied salary increment or adjustment. As it is, pay is the most important single motivator used in our organized society (Dessler, 1990c). "The Quest for Quality Education in the Face of Neglected Trained Teachers in Liberia: A Dilemma of Efficient Human Resource Development."

### **Gala Anniversary Celebrations in Schools: An Interruption of Instructional Calendar**

One setback in the implementation of the National School curriculum is the celebration of gala anniversaries in many schools across the country. Preparations and execution of these activities take between two to three weeks, when practice and rehearsals are carried out in and outside of the school environment whenever necessary. Accompanied by these ceremonies are requirements for multiple uniforms apart from the formal, regular school uniforms, representing various professions among which include Police, Military, Medical, Law, Engineering, Education



to name a few. Cost intensive, these regalia create undue financial burden on parents and guardians in an underperforming economy in which the rate of unemployment is very high. For the schools, these activities provide edutainment for the students. Whether there are government regulations to checkmate these practices? *Laissez Faire*, I am afraid.

As a result, gaps and omissions occur in curriculum delivery, due to the time spent on these extracurricular activities. One of the embarrassments this causes is traffic obstruction on streets and roads especially cities and big towns. The attendant risk is that students, usually marching on bands, are vulnerable to motor accidents caused by vehicles and commercial motorcyclists who always in a hurry.

It must be categorically clear that products of colleges of Teacher Education and Teacher Training Institutions are keen on the total implementation of the curriculum, as opposed to their untrained or unqualified counterparts who have limited knowledge about how the curriculum works. For the trained teacher, the "curriculum is a statement of knowledge, skills, instruction, evaluation, and context," whereas the unqualified teachers see it only as a mere requirement.

Leaving gaps in students' learning experiences is a serious breach of the right to education, quality education, that is. Hence, education is a fundamental human right under Article 26 Sections a & b (paraphrased) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: "Everyone has the right to education, directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious" (USAID/MoE, 2005).

Thus, with a holistic look at Human Rights, United Nations Former Secretary General U-Thant asserted: "The establishment of human rights provides the foundation upon which rests the political structures of human freedom; the achievement of human freedom generates the will as well as the capacity for economic and social progress; the attainment of economic and social progress provides the basis for true peace" (ABC of Teaching Human Rights, 1999).

### **Unregulated Tuition and Fees in the Liberian Education System**

Although the Ministry of Education issues permits to private and faith-based schools to operate, it does not regulate tuition and fees payments, and does not give freedom to parents to buy uniforms from sources of their choice. The schools exercise monopoly over the acquisition or sales of their respective uniforms including expensive sweat-in suits which are used for Physical Education.

In addition, they sell information sheets to students or parents at exorbitant prices especially to new students. A parent or guardian for example, intending to enroll more than one new student is compelled to buy information sheets for each of them. In addition, they buy admission or biodata forms separately as well. As part of admission requirements in some cases, these schools each student of a ream of papers, toiletries including other assortments which do not form part of the tuition and fees. Certainly, some officials of the Ministry of Education and other influential people both in government and the private sector run their own schools. Conflict of Interest is applicable under the circumstances.

## SUMMARY

As we have seen, the Dilemmas in the Quest for Quality Education in Liberia there are several factors that count, major among which some are systemic while others are emerging. For instance, there are beautiful education policies with limited implementation, which date as remote as the colonial and commonwealth periods, when in fact the American Colonization which founded Liberia did not include education on its agenda for colonization; when "resolutions were passed without concrete actions" (Reeves, 1995). Some weaknesses and academic malpractices are highlighted, though resourceful education policy documents are mentioned with their attendant attributes.

This expose therefore touches contemporary or rather perennial educational issues and is in no way intended to malign the reputations of individuals, institutions or organizations who hold stakes in the development and utilization of the potentialities of the youthful citizens and residents of Liberia. Any resemblance is a mere coincidence.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, this discourse represents the author's disposition in negotiating with the appropriate authorities and stakeholders to take strides to perfect the quality of education in Liberia by educating or training, employing, deploying, adequately remunerating, retaining, supervising, and appraising teachers. These actions should be guided by the Philosophy of Liberian Education, Professional Standards for Teachers in Liberia, Code of Conduct for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia, Training Module for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia, and the Education Reform Act of 2011 and Beyond. To this effect, John F. Kennedy (1963c), emphasized: "We will not fear to negotiate, nor will we negotiate out of fear."

If as a nation we should succeed in our quest for efficient human resource development through quality education, national policies and policy statements by our leaders must be actualized. For example, Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is quoted as saying: "I was elected through a free and peaceful election, I must preserve freedom and keep the peace; I campaigned against corruption, I must curb it; while we seek national unity and reconciliation, we must not sacrifice justice... we will demonstrate that democracy can work, even under the most challenging conditions."

As clearly stated in the National Civic Education Master Plan for Liberia (2006-2016), "The culture of democracy has to be taught, the structure of government has to be known and understood; the operations of all branches and institutions of government have to be communicated, and a communication channel must be opened to enable government and civil society dialogue regularly and to complement each other in the art of building a democratic society."

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