

# Teacher quality and Liberia's educational system

## Abstract

It is understood that most students in schools possess different talents that can be discovered, cultivated and developed to full capacity, if the appropriate learning/teaching techniques are used. These talents correspond to inherent abilities in a variety of fields that may include arts, humanities, science and technology, engineering and vocational. Conversely, today in Liberia, few students appear to make it through their school years easily, while others struggle through school, putting them at risk of going astray in the educational system, without realizing their full potential. This can be traceable to the lack of essential learning resources and quality teaching personnel, particularly in the rural areas. This paper thus carefully examined and discussed the current and potential of teacher quality and its developmental impacts on Liberia's Educational system, from the perspective of sustainable development.

**Keywords:** teacher quality, liberia, education system, learning/teaching approach

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**Abbreviations:** GOL, government of liberia; EFA, education for all

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the development of Liberia's educational system. Although the educational system was designed to accommodate everyone, Liberia's illiteracy rate is still estimated at fifty-three percent (53%) as of 2015.<sup>1</sup> With a current population of approximately 4.6 million,<sup>2</sup> 33.2% of Liberians have had no education, 31.1% have had only primary education while 35.75% have had secondary and tertiary education.<sup>1,2</sup> The unhealthy state of education in Liberia is further intensified by the lack of essential learning resources and personnel, resulting in a large proportion of students receiving less quality education.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, these challenges have led to an increased application of various strategies to the development of sustainable solutions to the problems of rural/urban education in the Liberian context. These efforts are as a result of the need to respond to the consequences of a fourteen-year long civil conflict on the education sector.<sup>2</sup>

## Discussion

In an effort to improve the educational system, the Government of Liberia (GoL) prioritized education in her Agenda for Transformation, with a goal to provide education for all (EFA). Although, the EFA goal was designed to cater for everyone in grades 1-9, regardless of the background or ability, the free and compulsory education program seems to struggle to keep everyone engaged. Each year, one in five students still leaves primary school without sustainable basic skills in numeracy and literacy.<sup>4</sup> Thus, considering Liberia's needs in terms of the EFA agenda, Liberia could not achieve most of the goals related to the Dakar Framework for Action that was adopted by the Government of Liberia, along with other government in the year 2000.<sup>2,5</sup> It was also in this regard that Liberia unveiled an ambitious Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2020 that preceded initial plan to reach six wide-ranging education goals in the year 2015.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, progress has been limited by available donor funding and the lack of adequate levels of research and development that focus on teacher quality and innovation development.

Furthermore, like in developed countries, the quality of Liberia's educational system cannot exceed the quality of the Nation's teachers. Evidence from around the world consistently arrives at the same simple conclusion.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the implications of teacher quality are quite significant to the growth and development of Liberia's education sector. First, it shows that teachers play a crucial role in the development of a Nation's educational system. Secondly, research has shown that teacher quality is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement,<sup>8</sup> while school organization, class size, leadership or financial conditions play a smaller role.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, advances in effective method of teaching can be translated into enhancement of students' learning abilities that could lead to the scale up of teacher's knowledge base, skills, and expertise. Hence, it is clear that supporting the professional development of Liberian teachers would provide a key contribution toward improving the educational system and the learning outcomes of Liberian students. There is, therefore, a need to develop a high level of competency and understanding of innovative teaching and learning approaches that can bolster the professional standing of teachers in Liberian schools, particularly in the rural areas.

To achieve this as a Nation, teachers must constantly engage in cutting-edge research on students' learning abilities and work together as a professional community. A national plan can also be developed to increase teachers' productivity through innovative teaching approaches that will enhance the learning abilities of the students. The plan could comprise of seminar/training session and follow-up/evaluation session. An integrated approach can further be used to develop a long term solutions to some of the educational and economical needs of people in rural/urban areas of Liberia. For instance, since basic science is an important element in the education of chemists, engineers and computer scientists, as well as practitioners of the other physical and biomedical sciences, its potentials can be used to extend and improve the understanding of other disciplines, through innovative teaching and research.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, schools that encourage the creative approaches to learning/teaching will deliberately promote diverse ways of

thinking and problem-solving in bolstering students' achievement and satisfaction of learning. The possible problem-solving and thinking skills developed through learning these approaches can be elucidated in generating the fundamental knowledge needed for the future educational and technological advances that can drive the economic engine of Liberia. Finally, the national plan can also explore the potential of different innovative teaching/learning techniques that could allow Liberian teachers transform their classrooms into a fun and friendly learning environment, while improving class participation.

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### Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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