

EDITORIAL

HARMONY IN NIGERIAN HEALTH SECTOR

Harmony denotes agreement in action, feeling or opinion. It is also a consistent, orderly or pleasing arrangement of parts; congruity. Disharmony: the apt word to describe the Nigerian health sector in recent times. The story has been that of incessant strife and strikes. The age-long cold war between the medical doctors and other workers in the health sector has escalated to the point of overt crises. The household is divided; things have fallen apart; and, the centre can no longer hold. Nigeria's health team could be likened to a team without team spirit or cohesion that is paramount for success. No wonder the health sector has failed to achieve any meaningful developmental strides. Among all the resources necessary for productivity, human resources play a pivotal role as it coordinates other factors of production. When the human resources are in disharmony, productivity plummets.

What are responsible for the frequent industrial action and infighting among professionals in the health sector? Glaring recklessness and injustice in the structure, privileges and emoluments of health workers in Nigeria have been blamed. Lack of equal opportunities and treatment has also been alluded to. Corruption, just like in other sectors in Nigeria, contributes its own quota. In addition, insincerity of politicians and government also play a role. Use of temporary and stopgap solutions in crisis situations does not also help. The federal government has failed in the quest for industrial harmony in the health sector.

Sincerity, among other things, is required if harmony is to be restored in the health sector. There must be sincere effort on the part of government, politicians, health workers and other stake holders in addressing the various issues and finding a lasting solution. Conflict cannot be prevented all the time but it can be managed; though, conflict prevention saves time, money and energy. Furthermore, it should be noted that equity and equality is not the same. Equity means to each man give his due and equality means to each man give the same due. If equality is not obtainable in communism and Heaven, it will certainly not work in a capitalist economy that Nigeria claims to operate. Justice and equity (not equality) should reign supreme.

Furthermore, choice is one of the realities of life. One can choose to be a catechist or a priest, a driver or a conductor, a goalkeeper or an attacker, or even an astronaut. A person's choice should be respected. Any choice has its rights and responsibilities. For example, it will be wrong to judge a goalkeeper by the number of goals he has scored. On the other hand the conductor is not the driver because he cannot also 'drive'; he is not just licensed to drive. If he wishes, he could, may be, undergo some training in driving, take a driving test and get certified to drive. Everyone in a team is important and how well one does his work is crucial to the overall success of the team. There should be mutual respect for each member of the health team. No one should want any right that he is not ready to also fulfil its inalienable responsibility.

Finally, the health sector is supposed to be where medical humanism and harmony reign supreme, not a place saddled with acrimony, strife and tension. Mutual respect, give and take, and team

work is the antidote to the ancient battle among professionals in Nigerian health sector. Equity should be enthroned! May we in the midst of clutter find simplicity, from discord find harmony and in the middle of difficulty find the opportunity we need to forge forward.

Dr. Balantine Eze

Editor-in-Chief