

Evolution of Teaching Profession in Nigeria and NCE Teacher of Our Dream

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Abstract

The following is a prayer by a School Principal. “Dear Lord, give me a teacher thrice blessed with wisdom, initiative, vision, understanding, dependability, awareness, a sense of fair play, a keen sense of humour. Give me a teacher who is sympathetic, kind and just, yet firm and courteous. Give me a teacher who has an overdose of good old-fashioned common sense, seasoned well with professional spirit. Give me a teacher who knows the value of discipline, one who at all times has control of a situation yet not dictatorial. Give me a teacher who threatens not, neither one who makes hasty decisions, nor inflicts unjust and often ridiculous punishment. Give me a teacher who is willing to do perhaps a little more than her share, and above all, one who is on the job. Give me a teacher who feels the responsibility of the school plant, one who is aware of lavatories, halls, playgrounds, and lunchroom. Give me a teacher who will cooperate and work with her fellow teachers. Give me a teacher who has a quiet dignity. Give me a teacher who has, besides a well rounded personality and good educational background, a desire not only to teach but to be a really good teacher. But, God, Above all, Give me a teacher who loves to teach children” (Anonymous author). If the above prayer is taken as an expression of what is expected of an ideal teacher, how far have we gone in attaining this feat in Nigeria? Are we there yet? If no, what else do we still need to do. These and more are the questions this paper attempts to address. Again, considering the crucial role the teacher has to play in nation building, it is sure that if we can get it right in having the teacher of our dream, then, there is hope for a better tomorrow.

Keywords: Teacher, dream, evolution, teaching profession, Nigeria

Introduction

The teacher has a very important role to play in nation building; consequently, so much is expected of him. This paper attempts to outline what should be the qualities of a good teacher to be able to perform his role effectively. In doing this, the past efforts of government in developing teacher education were examined. Again, what still need to be done to attain the ideal standard were outlined. It is assumed that, if we can get it right in having the teacher of our dream, then we would have laid a good foundation for a better tomorrow.

History and Development of Teacher Education

In about 1853 the Christian Missionaries Society (C.M.S) established the C.M.S. Training Institution at Abeokuta for teacher training particularly for evangelism. The 1882 and 1887 government bills for the promotion of and

assistance of education in the Gold Coast Colony and Lagos Colony respectively were passed into ordinances which included grants-in-aid to schools and teacher training institutions for teachers (Akanbi, 1998). Teaching qualifications were of four grades, Grades II, III, IV and I at the initial stage with no special requirement or training in becoming a candidate for teacher qualifying examinations. There were also Honorary Certificates for experienced teachers. However, in 1891 there was a call for a teachers’ certificate examination that demanded professional techniques. It was in this year that the foundation for professionalism in teaching was laid. The Nigerian teacher’s certificate programme then came to include teaching academic subjects, teaching methods and classroom management; the established teaching institutes provided the functions of pupil education and apprenticeship education (Akanbi,1998).

About 1929 two types of teacher training institutions evolved, viz:

1. the Elementary Training Centres (ETC) for lower primary school teachers and
2. the Higher Elementary Training Colleges (HETC)

The ETC course lasting two years after a six or seven-year primary education and some teaching experience culminated in the Grade III Teachers' Certificate. The HETC course also of two year duration led to the Grade II Teacher's Certificate. Teaching experience of two years after the completion of primary school was a pre-requisite to being allowed to go to Grade III course. Similarly, admission into HETC offering the Grade II course required a minimum of two-year teaching experience after the Grade III course.

The Grade III Teachers' course concentrated on the infant method. The advancement to teach at the upper primary level required a Grade III teacher proceeding to a Grade II Teachers' College. The Grade II Teachers' courses were in groups of one-year, two-year, three-year and five-year programmes depending on candidates possessing the secondary certificate and primary school leaving certificate as pre-admission qualifications. The qualification for a Grade I Teachers' Certificate was as a result of the candidate being in possession of a Teachers' Grade II Certificate and passing in two General Certificate in Education Advanced Level (G.C.E. A. Level) subjects. The possession of two teaching subjects at the GCE Advanced level and passing a prescribed academic teacher education examination and having been experienced in teaching for a considerable number of years also qualifies one to be a Grade I teacher and entry into a rural science training award of a Grade I Teacher Certificate. In 1951 the qualifications recognized for teacher registration were Standard Six Certificates, Vernacular Teachers' Certificates, Elementary Certificates (Grade III Teacher's Certificate) and Higher Elementary Certificates (Grade II Teachers' Certificates) in the primary schools. In 1954 the Grade III Teachers' Colleges were gradually being turned into Grade II Teachers Colleges (Akanbi,1998).

The Higher College, Yaba in between 1932 and 1947 introduced the Diploma of Education course catering for secondary school leavers who passed both the Senior Cambridge School Certificate Examination and the Yaba College Entrance

Examination. Emphasis was on science teaching. The Yaba College Secondary School Master's Diploma course extended over three years and a three month teaching practice. The Science Master's curriculum of studies included Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, Botany and Mathematics. Education was taught in the second and final years to all student teachers in the sciences and arts. The Diploma course was discontinued with in 1950 at Yaba when the University College Ibadan came into existence in 1948. A one-year course for university graduates in one or two teaching subjects led to a diploma session. A one-year Associateship course for experienced Grade II teachers with the aspiration of becoming school headmasters also started at Ibadan in 1961. In between 1961 and 1964 graduate teachers with Bachelor of Arts (B.A) and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in Education degree were produced in the first generation Nigerian Universities at Ibadan, Zaria, Lagos, Ife and Nsukka (Akanbi,1998).

The defunct Nigerian Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology were at one time for special post secondary education courses and teacher training. The University degrees, Teaching Diploma, Domestic Science Teachers' Certificates and Diploma of the Higher College Yaba also became qualifications for teacher registration in the 1950s. It was in between 1960 and 1970 that Nigeria decided to have Grade I teachers and graduate teachers to teach in the secondary schools, technical institutes and teacher training colleges. The training of Grade I teachers was placed in the sixth form streams of some secondary schools and in technical institutes.

The Birth and Functions of Colleges of Education

Knowledge explosion, need for new curricula of studies and general poor pupil performance in the primary schools required that Grade II teachers possess new techniques, approaches and new situations. the Teachers' Grade One Colleges recommended by the 1960 Ashby Commission gave rise to the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme and certificate. The NCE course is for the preparation of teachers for the lower levels of secondary schools and in the teacher training colleges.

According to Akanbi (1998) between 1961 and 1964, with the aid of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Federal and regional governments established five Advanced Teachers' Colleges as an emergency scheme to produce qualified non-graduate teachers for service at the lower levels of the secondary schools. The sixth one came up in 1968 under the University of Lagos College of Education was made up of the Faculty of Education and absorbing the Federal Advanced Teacher Training College. The National Teachers' Institute also awards the NCE Certificate. A number of Polytechnics in Nigeria offer courses leading to the award of NCE Technical Education today. Candidates seeking admissions into the NCE programme are expected to be in possession of a Teacher Grade II Certificate with merit or credit passes in the teaching subjects they want to offer during NCE courses. Holders of the West African School Certificate (Senior School Certificate) or the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level with credits in the subjects to be offered at the NCE course including English Language were also qualified to sit for the entrance examination initially conducted by individual Colleges of Education. An NCE candidate was expected to pass at a final examination in an Advanced Teachers' College in two major science or two arts subjects along with education, practical teaching and an ancillary subject. An ancillary subject could be Library Studies, General Science or Civics.

Each Advanced Teacher's College was affiliated to a university which moderated her curricula and examinations. The NCE became a qualification for admission into Nigerian University, along with the GCE Advanced level, apart from being a teaching qualification. The NCE candidates were specially being admitted into the B.Ed., B.Sc. (Education) and B.A. (Education) degree programmes. A parallel to a College of Education is The National Technical Teachers' College, Yaba established in 1968 to prepare well qualified non-graduate teachers of technical and commercial colleges.

The discrepancies in the admission of NCE graduates into universities and the different minimum standards being set by the different universities to which the Colleges of Education are differently affiliated led to a new policy on the

governing of the Colleges of Education. A new policy of control of the Colleges of Education made by the Federal Government removed the affiliations with universities and replaced in 1989 with the established National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

Establishment of and Functions of the National Commission For Colleges Of Education (NCCE)

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was born to create the conditions for the harmonization of the different standards of academics, staffing, instruction, and learning facilities in the Colleges of Education (NCCE, 1994, 1995). The NCCE was set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria and backed by the provision of section 5 (c) and (d) of Decree Number 3 of 1989. The NCCE, like the National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for the Polytechnics is all out for the promotion of higher education in Nigeria. The NCCE is charged with;

1. laying down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education at the NCE level including quality of staff;
2. accrediting new and old courses, certificates and other academic awards of the Colleges of Education.
3. disbursement of running and capital grants to Federal Government owned Colleges of Education and special funds to the state and Private Colleges of Education.

Some other issues being addressed by the NCCE of teacher education are:

- teaching professionalism
- need for a Teachers' Registration Council
- provision for internship period before the registration and licensing of teachers
- Conditions of service for all professional teachers i.e. improving on the status of the Nigerian teachers.
- maintenance of reasonable balance in the typical Nigerian teacher.

THE WAY FORWARD

Nigeria is still in search of progressive education. Nigeria had the 6-3-3-4 education system of primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and tertiary education. The Colleges of Education are

a tertiary institution offering teacher education courses which are not in the curriculum of studies of the primary and junior secondary schools. For example Chemistry, Physics, Biology, History, Geography, Government, Accounts, Shorthand and Economics are not taught in the primary and junior secondary schools as separate subjects and yet the Colleges of Education still offer these subjects.

In further pursuit of excellence in teacher education in Nigeria the Colleges of Education and National Commission for Colleges of Education would need to address the issues of

- i. knowledge explosion
- ii. the challenges of computer age
- iii. Nigerian economy as it relates to privatization and private establishment of Colleges of Education
- iv. the challenges of unemployment as may affect the NCE graduates
- v. social status of teachers, vis-à-vis the professional academic preparation of teachers in comparison with other professionals like the medical doctors, lawyers, engineers and accountants
- vi. academic and administrative headship of the Colleges of Education
- vii. fostering of research in primary and secondary education

NEEDS FOR THE REVIEW OF THE NCE PROGRAMME

The production of the NCE graduates in Nigeria needs to be reviewed. Many NCE graduates prefer to use the NCE certificates as pre-requisite qualification for admission into universities and thus use such opportunities to qualify as first university degree graduates, either in education or some other disciplines. The Colleges of Education therefore need to reassess the cohort wastage in training teachers for the NCE level of education.

The high professional level manpower of the nation in the areas of medicine, law, engineering, surveying and administration recognizes a minimum qualification of university first

degree or its equivalent for the professional call registration. In accountancy a University degree holder in accounting, business administration and Economics does not get registered as a

professional accountant. Architecture and medicine run a six year post-secondary education programme in the Universities for professional qualification training. The Guidance and Counselling Association of Nigeria and Educational Managers are working towards making a

Master's degree in Guidance and Counselling and Educational Management respectively as the minimum registrable qualification in the professions. The NCCE is expected to look further into

making the teaching profession a high level specialized programme. It is about time the policy makers in the Nigerian education system removed the social and academic distance between graduate and non-graduate (NCE) teachers by making a university first degree in education the minimum registrable qualification for teaching in schools. In medicine today there are no more training grounds for junior medical doctors. Teachers at the primary and junior secondary levels must not be seen as inferior to teachers at the tertiary level. The status of the Nigerian Teacher needs to be raised. The Colleges of Education need to introduce an indepth study of Educational Psychology, Teaching Methodologies, Sociology of Education and other disciplines in Educational foundation that will appropriately equip teachers to teach at any level of the Nigerian education system. A change from the NCE certification and course contents to teacher education at the first degree level would help improve on the quality of teacher education in the country.

Along the line of curriculum review of the Colleges of Education the NCCE shall need to oversee the publications emanating from these NCE certificate awarding institutions. Some Universities in Nigeria do not seem to recognize the assumed academic standard of educational Journals being published by Nigerian Colleges of Education. A review of the curriculum of studies by the NCCE in the direction of making the Colleges of Education degree awarding may enhance the fostering of research in primary and secondary education.

As earlier stated knowledge explosion at present and the challenges of computer age call for a review of the Nigerian educational policy of making the NCE the minimum teaching qualification in the country. The present day

teacher is no doubt going to be faced with learners whose exposure to computer education and high level technology of electronic and electrical devices has helped increase their knowledge of their social, economic, scientific, educational and political environment. A teacher with just the NCE curriculum of studies may not be able to cope with the limited knowledge he possesses on how to find out information for the purpose of teaching. There is the need for further enriching the curriculum of studies in teacher education. A highly academically and professionally trained teacher can help establish and maintain the balance of intellectually able and less able pupils/students to meet the expectation of scholastic success.

The NCE graduates are faced with the challenges of unemployment. The fresh NCE graduates are no more given the opportunity to serve in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme and yet University and the mission of teacher education pervades everything that could be said about the job of teaching and the production of professional teachers that would be well-adjusted, humane, self-reliant, productive and conforming to the ethics of the teaching profession.

From the special importance of education to the survival of any nation, we appreciate the critical role of the teacher in the educative process. Like many nations, Nigeria has adopted education as “an instrument par excellence for national development” (FRN, 1981). The great educationist of old, John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) espoused the view that although the seeds of knowledge, virtue and piety may be implanted in us as human beings, it is through education that the actual knowledge, the actual virtue and the actual piety are developed. Indeed the type of knowledge, the kind of experiences children are exposed to and the attitudes they acquire through the educative process are vital for national development and survival. The roles and mission of the teacher in this crucial enterprise cannot be trivialized. He is the “keyman in the entire educational programme” (NERC, 1989), “the pivot of the educational process” (Ukeje, 1991) and “the custodian of whatever ideals and values the society expects their children to learn in schools (Lassa, 1993).

It was Mallinson (1975) who suggested that the quality and caliber of teachers that service the educational system of a country could serve as a

valid index of that country’s development and progress. As he has put it: “as is the school, so is society, and as is the teacher, so is the school”. Therefore, the mission of teacher education for the 21st century Nigeria should be the production of professionalized and career-oriented teachers who would actualize what Jonathan (1983) described as “manpower services model of education”.

It is a mission that demands much more than mere academic improvements of the student-teachers. It must incorporate a combination of academic enhancement and the pedagogy of teaching as a vibrant professional activity. It must emphasize adequate practicum both in the micro-teaching situation and in actual practicing schools. Harvighurst (1981) listed nine important roles performed by teachers in the schools. These are:

- i. Mediator of learning
- ii. Disciplinary or controller of student behaviour
- iii. Parent substitute
- iv. Confidant to students
- v. Judgment of achievement
- vi. Organizer of curriculum
- vii. Bureaucrat
- viii. Scholar and research specialist
- ix. Member of teachers organization.

The mission of teacher education should be to turn out teachers who are equipped to effectively serve in these nine capacities and in addition, help to change Nigeria into a new social order where no man is oppressed and where truth and justice prevail. Therefore, the teacher-educators must now begin to convince the student-teachers with historical, theoretical and philosophical justifications why they must play these roles nobly as professional teachers.

Teacher education in Nigeria should aim at relating the standard of teachers to the socio-economic crisis in the society. Smith (1990) had argued that in appraising the worth of teachers, both social and personality variables should be considered besides technical competence. As Smith has put it:

The evaluation of teachers’ work is never just about assessing technical competence; it is also ideological in the way it focuses on the distribution

of power and the exercise of social control through social relations, the personality dispositions and the distribution of cultural capital necessary for the maintenance of existing social relationships. The mission of teacher education should therefore strive for excellence in the preparation of teachers that would be free from the fetters of routinization of tasks, rationalized curricula and specified or sequenced roles. Rather the teachers of our dream in Nigeria should be equipped with knowledge in depth in their special areas and technical strategies to enable maximum flexibilities in responding to the dynamics of development in a progressive Nigeria. Opportunity should never be given for the society to blame teachers for 'falling standard' or education, graduate unemployment, declining productivity, moral decadence and other vices in the society. The preparation of future teachers for Nigeria should recognize the distinction between what Shulman (1987) referred to as "curriculum knowledge" and "pedagogical content knowledge". The latter is needed by teacher-trainees in order to acquire the "distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching". In line with this paradigm, Okebukola (1995) suggests that:

Training activities geared specifically to preparing teachers need to contemplate not only instruction on the curriculum and specific teaching procedures, but more importantly the development of the ability to reason 'pedagogically' on the part of student teachers in order to convert substantive knowledge into teachable knowledge and experiment with how it can be done.

On the basis of the foregoing, one can argue that the Colleges of Education are better suited than the universities for the preparation of teachers, particularly those that would function at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. While the teacher-educators in the Colleges of Education take pains to teach 'pedagogic content knowledge', their university counterparts seem satisfied with lecturing. There is therefore the apprehension that graduate teachers turned out by the universities may emulate the approaches of their lecturers, by lecturing rather than teaching pupils and selling handouts rather than organizing instruction and directing learning. In this regard,

one is tempted to recommend that the training of teachers should be entrusted solely to Colleges of Education while the universities could continue with the production of education graduates in the areas of administration and management, curriculum design, psychology, philosophy, sociology, etc. In addition, the Faculties of Education should now concentrate effort on post graduate programmes of teacher education. This is a mission that would ultimately gratify the teaching profession and equally promote educational quality in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Within the last 169 years that is between 1853 and 2022 so much has been done to reposition teaching as a noble profession and so much has been achieved, however much is still needed to be done. This paper has outlined some necessary measures that should be taken. Considering the crucial role the teacher has to play in nation building, it is sure that if we can get it right in having the teacher of our dream, then, there is hope for a better tomorrow.

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