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The Delivery System in Teacher Education in Nigeria: Traditional Practices and New Paradigms

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Introduction

Education is accepted all over the world as a process of transmitting the cultural heritage, stabilizing the present and improving or changing the future. The school system, regardless of which level of operation, is generally accepted as a major agent of education that provides avenues for interaction between students and teachers on subject matters. Today, there seems to be grave social concern about the potential of the school system to deliver sound education to the children in Nigeria because the education system is crisis-ridden. Lassa (2000) laments that there is the crisis of values, crisis of social confidence, crisis of resource management, crisis of discipline, crisis of population explosion, crisis of educational orientation and social relevance as well as the crisis of the teaching profession becoming a dying and decadent industry particularly in Nigeria.

The role of the teacher in education cannot be over-emphasized because 'no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers' (FGN 2004). It is imperative, therefore, that teachers must master their subject-matter in order to impart knowledge successfully (Van den Berg 2002). Teacher education is considered as a process of developing skilled teaching manpower to enable them provide good quality and relevant education to learners at whatever level they operate within the education system.

In the colonial period, development was incidental or peripheral; the goal of economic policy was mainly exploitation of natural resources, and exportation

of raw materials or semi-finished products accompanied by the marketing of industrial goods manufactured in Britain. As a result, even pencils, erasers and geometry boxes for schools were imported. Naturally, an economy of this kind made no great demand on education in terms of manpower production. The demands on the quality of training were even more limited since no critical abilities and creative potentials were to be encouraged, lest the stability of the colonial system itself may be shaken by the educated. In fact, education was treated as an evil necessary for day-to-day working (Adesina 2004).

Similarly, Fafunwa (1974) states that education became text-bookish in its content; standing aloof from the realities of life and concentrating on the 'knowledge' of individual 'disciplines'. Physics or economics were taught according to worldwide abstract principles and laws, creating an impression of comprehensiveness of the subjects even though, through such an approach, they were devoid of social implications, utility and purpose. The role of the teacher was correspondingly to teach the assigned subject meticulously and thoroughly, and to 'examine' on the basis of students' ability to reproduce what they had been taught. The system tended to breed conformism and pedantic scholarship. That such a system practiced over centuries, and in so many countries, still produced great thinkers, scholars and scientists who have, in a sense, been the architects of our civilization as it is today, is a clear proof of the irrepressible nature of human creativity and of man's unceasing struggle to overcome ignorance, conquer nature and improve the quality of his life. The situation has, however, radically altered since the middle of the last century. Country after country has been freed from the clutches of imperialism. National initiatives have been unleashed to transform economies and societies. The very word 'development' has acquired a new meaning and dimension. Change, rather than status quo, is the order of the day and education has been recognized as the tool to bring it about. Great wealth of experience has been accumulated on the modalities by which education can play such a role. Perhaps it would not be wrong to say that in the process, the concept of education itself has been changed. It is no more confined to formal structures and institutions – it can reach out in a variety of ways and the human resources of the whole community could be used for the purpose (Adesina 2004).

Freeman and Johnson (2004) explain that the dynamics of knowledge have led to the concept of life-long learning for the individual. A great deal has been discovered about learning itself and its highly personal character. Three boundaries of the well-established disciplines of the past have crumbled and inter-disciplinary teaching and researches have come into existence.

According to the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004), the goals of teacher education shall be:

- a. producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;

- b. encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. helping teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large, and enhancing their commitment to national goals;
- d. providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and capable of making them adaptable to changing conditions; and
- e. enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

It will not be wide off the mark at this juncture to trace the history of teacher education in Nigeria.

History of Teacher Education

The importance and the role of the teaching profession in any society flows out of what the society expects from education at a human level, what role it assigns to education in national development and what goals of development are pursued by the nation. These three levels are inter-related and they flow from the historic and socio-cultural situation as much as from the economic policy of the country. The quality of educational services and the learning outcomes of pupils or students are determined by a large number of factors, of which the role of the teacher is uppermost.

In the case of Nigeria, the attainment of independence was the result of a prolonged national struggle in the course of which the goals of development came to be quite well defined, the most important being the building up of a modern self-reliant economy, making optimum use of our own resources in men and materials (Aarons 2003). This is based on a clear realization that, in the world of today, the strength and relative independence of the economic base determines the scope, even of political freedom. The other and equally important goal of national development can be said to be the enhancement of production accompanied by the distribution of goods and services with a view to ameliorating poverty, creating conditions of social justice and thus strengthening the foundations of a socialist and democratic state. The goals of national development translated in human terms imply the cultivation of a personality with knowledge and awareness, not only in the special fields but also of culture, tradition and the needs of the peoples; a personality endowed with values which would promote socialism, national integration, secularism and scientific temper together with enthusiasm to change society through personal commitment and involvement. In other words, our concept of national development goes far beyond economic growth: the concern for creating a cohesive and vibrant nation out of people speaking different languages, professing different religions, possessing a variety of cultures is equally great. In this sphere, education has to be the mainstay of our endeavour.

Obanya (2002) asserts that students would learn on their own through resources and situations provided for the purpose and they would develop an enquiring mind, discover knowledge and arrive at attitudes and outlooks according to their own light. Many of them would go far beyond the teacher in their scope and competence; hence, the teacher would really become not one who knows and tells but a facilitator of learning, perhaps a co-discoverer of knowledge through common experience with the student. Improvement in quality would also require the full utilization of educational technology which, in turn, needs a tremendous effort to train academics and produce 'software' suitable for our purposes. Thus, raising the quality of education in the context of our social and economic aspirations acquires a very different meaning from what prevailed in the pre-independence period.

Mkpa (2002) states that, 'at the secondary and post-secondary levels, there were about eight different qualifications that could earn one a teaching job'. These included Ordinary National Diploma, Nigeria Certificate in Education, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's Degree (without teacher education), and Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education, Master of Education and Doctorate Degree. Until recently, teaching was not professionalized. It was an all-comer field. The teacher education curriculum was geared toward primary school teacher education only. That was the practice in existence between 1896 and 1970. The type of teachers needed in Nigeria has become clearly defined in the National Policy on Education Implementation Committee blueprint. It was prescribed that the types and qualifications of teachers required should be as follows:

- a. *Pre-primary Education*: Grade II Teacher with NCE teachers as heads;
- b. *Primary Education*: NCE teachers with graduate teachers as heads;
- c. *Junior Secondary Schools*: NCE and university graduates;
- d. *Senior Secondary Schools*: NCE and university graduates with professional qualifications;
- e. *Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education*: University graduates with post-graduate qualifications in their disciplines together with professional qualifications, practical industrial exposure and experience;
- f. *University*: University graduates with postgraduate qualifications together with professional qualifications and experience.

This prescription implies that the minimum qualification to teach in our primary school in Nigeria is NCE and the government has taken steps to ensure its implementation. All the existing Grade II 'teachers' colleges are being phased out and serving Grade II teachers are being re-trained to obtain NCE before the deadline to disengage them.

It is obvious that the new dimensions of education which make it an integral part of the national developmental enterprise puts great responsibility on the main vehicle of education, namely the teacher. Teachers not only implement an education programme by commensurate methods but they are also its originator. It is teachers who interact with students of different ages and frames of thought to ensure that wide-ranging educational objectives are achieved without reducing education to either brainwashing or propaganda. As intellectuals, teachers are social critics but with a special sense of responsibility to lead in a constructive direction. They are also their own teachers since they continually work at the frontiers of knowledge and often face problems and situations which are unprecedented, and where past experience is of limited value. As agents of change, they too have to be flexible and ready to change.

In the sphere of the traditional work of the teacher, namely teaching and research, the perspectives have radically changed during the last few decades. When knowledge was expanding at a relatively slow pace and the purpose of classroom teaching was also largely to maintain social status quo, courses and prescribed books were not in a state of flux, teachers could also get by for years on the basis of notes they prepared, which were often dictated to students since they had to reproduce the ideas in order to pass examinations. Now, with the explosion of knowledge and the need to base teaching on facts and figures related to our own society, curricula have often to be completely recast and the exercise has to be repeated every few years. Consequently, in order to remain up-to-date, teachers have to be on their toes, learning on a continuous basis.

Imperative of New Paradigms

The role of the teacher in engaging students in learning is immensely complex in that it concerns almost all academic and social aspects of the classroom environment. Teaching practices have also to change since what is intended is not superficial learning but deep understanding of phenomena, ideas or problems so that knowledge can be applied to concrete situations in order to change the reality. Students should not be treated as passive receptacles of knowledge; they must be encouraged to be curious and explorative, critical and innovative. Furthermore, since the cognitive domain alone cannot be singled out as the objective of teaching, the affective domain of attitudes, character, values, and social and developmental concerns have to be taken into account. Thus the teaching, however well prepared and good it may be, can no more suffice. Psychologists have given enough insight into the processes through which learning is accomplished, and one knows that a number of devices such as field work projects, seminars, stimulatory exercises, problem-solving sessions, tutorials and term papers, etc., are available to achieve different objectives of teaching. New audio-visual aids are more versatile and effective than the one-time shades,

transparencies and films are available and will be increasingly common in the years to come. Teachers have, therefore, to equip themselves with new tools of their trade, to utilize interactive methods of instruction.

In connection with the use of films, video cassettes and video discs, and because of the lowered prices accompanied by greater sophistication of computers, there is also the opportunity to produce software in all subjects, at all levels and in a variety of modes. Since television radio and the social media are already taking up the broadcast of some educational programmes, this also provides an opportunity to teachers to use their creative ability in the interest of distance education which would greatly enhance the reach as well as the scope of higher education. Programmes of continuing education for the public at large, as also of professionals including teachers themselves, give additional dimensions to the activity of teachers which is directly related to national manpower development.

The cooperative feature is all the more important because skill and field or practical-oriented training which is often a part of such courses, can best be done through other institutions and agencies whose cooperation has to be sought. Teachers alone can negotiate with concerned experts and agencies to get these programmes going. In fact, when teachers will take the initiative in establishing educational programmes with the involvement of government agencies and departments, public sector industry and voluntary organizations, only then will highly relevant programme be evolved and put on the ground, improving employability of the students graduating from the system.

Linkage with socioeconomic activity is also necessary for conducting studies and research in highly pertinent subjects. For example, the department of agriculture may be taking special measures for the distribution of seed or fertilizer, or making cold storage facilities available. Students and scholars in our educational institutions could easily study the impact of these programmes in the given sociocultural matrix – impacts on productivity, rural development, family resources, nutrition, schooling, readiness for social change, and so on. Many times, scientific and technological problems will be identified through such linkage, enabling a research programme to be mounted. This collaboration will open up a mine of ideas, some of which may lead to improvement in productivity and performance, and others to growth of knowledge, which has long-term fall-out in the form of new applications. Teachers in higher education, through such relevant research, would not only improve their professional performance, help scholars to be in great demand for employment, but they would also help to solve numerous social, cultural and economic problems. Basic research, in any case, is the strong point of university teachers.

Many of these activities would call for new styles of work and modes of management, needing changes in institutional procedures and even in their

governance. This has to be approached with an open mind since no existing structures and functions are immutable or sacrosanct. If the educational institutions are to become well-knit into the fabric of productive activity in our society, the very concept of autonomy will undergo a definite change. A 'systems approach' will replace the ivory tower approach.

There are many things which need to be done now, which were not visualized in the colonial period, or even otherwise in the processes of the development of some advanced countries of the world. But it is clear that whether one talks of high quality of education or of new methods of instruction, restructuring of courses or linkages with economic activities, the great tasks in the building of student character and temperament or of high quality research connected with development needs and related problems of management of education, it is the teacher who plays the crucial role. Teachers are instruments of educational change as much as education is an instrument of social change and national development. If teachers are not inspired, but frustrated, if they are not given the encouragement to perform their role and are in fact, neglected or deprived even of the basic necessities, then they cannot be expected to be committed to a human or a professional role which is appropriate to current needs. In fact, in the negative sense, harried and frustrated teachers may become overly conscious of their personal or group needs and oblivious to the needs and call of the society around. Such teachers may not only shun their duties, but may do many other things to miseducate the young people, thereby multiplying the problems of the society. The National Commission on Teachers in Higher Education would therefore make a fervent plea, on the one hand, to the Government to appreciate how potent teachers are in engineering social change and hence to provide them status, encouragement and resources for the purpose; and on the other, to the teachers to open their minds and hearts to the new possibilities, and to discharge their responsibilities with an urgent sense of social purpose. Grant (1990: 23) notes:

...from a multicultural perspective, all students should receive an education that continuously affirms human diversity – one that embraces the history and culture of *all* racial groups and that teaches people to take charge of their own destinies.... With regard to teaching, a multicultural perspective assumes that teachers will hold high expectations for all students and that they will challenge those students who are trapped in the cycle of poverty and despair to rise above it.

In addition, teachers should:

- simplify the language of instruction, not just the concept being taught;
- work toward depth, not breadth of information, presenting materials in a clear, concise, comprehensible manner and eliminating all peripheral, non-essential information;

- impart information through oral, visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning modalities;
- use graphic organizers, such as webs, Venn diagrams and charts, to make information more accessible to second-language learners. Content materials present text which is too dense for second-language learners;
- present content area vocabulary and concepts using regalia, picture files, and hands-on activities; and,
- examine students' backgrounds and learn how their past experiences will effect and affect learning. The impact of students' backgrounds on learning will depend on their previous schooling, home languages and cultures, and the concepts important to those cultures (Ponsessa 1996).

Given the above explanation, it can also be explained that, as a result of the growing graduate unemployment in Nigeria, there is a need to give entrepreneurial training to all our graduating students. The teachers should not be excluded; they should first be educated in this direction for them to transfer the knowledge to the students. This implies that future teacher education must include some entrepreneurial skill development courses that must be taken by all. The teachers should not only be trained in the act of self-development through continuous learning, they should also be adequately prepared for self-employment. Moreover, owing to the various economic reforms of government in Nigeria, there have been some cutbacks in social sector expenditure including those on education. Hence, there are gaps between resource requirement and resource allocation to institutions. The implication of this is that teachers must develop the capability to improve. Future teachers must be developed to possess these capabilities.

In sum, it is imperative that these five challenges in teaching and learning with technology be tackled adequately in the training of teachers, by:

1. creating learning environments that promote active learning, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and knowledge creation;
2. developing twenty first century literacy (information, digital, and visual) among students;
3. reaching and engaging today's learners;
4. encouraging adoption and innovation in teaching and learning with IT; and,
5. advancing innovation in teaching and learning with technology in an era of inadequate resources.

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