

PERCEIVING THE DEMANDS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION WITHIN A SOCIAL CONTEXT

Sule M.N. & Okam, C.C.

*Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education, University of Jos.*

Abstract:

The Nigerian philosophy of Education is the most veritable base upon which the Nigerian society rests. It craves for the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen for a sustainable society. Thus, the philosophy is desirous to localize the school curriculum for the purpose of inculcating in the youths useful and practical skills to appreciate manual labour and for community realities. The paper therefore has provided guidelines regarding the purpose of Nigerian education at a variety of levels with particular reference to primary and secondary education, university education, teacher education as well as women's education.

Introduction:

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference influenced the Federal Government's decision to set up in 1973, a National Seminar on Education Policy. The report of this Seminar formed the basis for the Federal Government's White Paper known as the 'National Policy on Education', published in 1977. The main tenets of the Nigerian philosophy of education are documented in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. This philosophy accepts the basic goal of education, among other things, as being that of preparing the pupil for full responsible citizenship. This philosophy is based on an integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen. Thus, it is the Government's desire that the Nigerian political framework should reflect the following:

- a. A just, free and democratic society;
- b. A society with full opportunities for all its citizens;
- c. A society that is able to generate a dynamic economic; and
- d. A society which is characterized by strength, unity and self-reliance.

As it is expected that, this philosophy should operate in harmony with Nigeria's national objectives, it has to be geared towards self-actualization, better human relationships and effective citizenship. Values which are meant to be taught as part of instructions for an achievement of the foregoing objectives include:

- a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- b. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- c. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal relations;
- d. Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- e. Respect for the dignity of labour;

- f. And promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of the children.

The philosophy has shed light on the issue of localizing the curriculum for the purpose of bringing about a teaching of curriculum maintenance and useful practical skills so as to get the Nigerian youths to appreciate manual labour and community realities. The philosophy derives much of its strength from its concern for a review of the old inherited curriculum and identify new national goals for education in Nigeria at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) as well as provide guidelines on how the system should function so as to meet the socio-economic needs and aspirations of youth and adults of the Nigerian society. The philosophy has provided guidelines regarding the purpose of Nigerian education at a variety of levels with particular reference to the following areas, namely: primary education; secondary education; university education; teacher education; women's education; education for living; and the role of science and technology in national development. The philosophy behind these levels of education is considered below:

Primary Education

It was considered that the main aims of education at this level should be:

- a. Permanent literacy;
- b. Sound basis of scientific and reflective thinking;
- c. Adaptability to changing societal environments;
- d. Physical, emotional and intellectual growth;
- e. Identification of oneself with humanity and the world around him;
- f. Opportunity to develop mechanical, vocational and manipulative skills;
- g. Character and moral training; and
- h. Ability to communicate effectively.

The philosophy stipulated that a fulfillment of these aims called for a six-year primary education commencing from the age of six years.

Secondary Education

The philosophy maintains that secondary education should be both a preparation for life and for higher education. In particular, it should be an education for self-realization, better human relationships, self and national economic efficiency, effective citizenship and civil responsibility, national consciousness and national unity, social and political progress including scientific and technological awareness.

The philosophy made a strong case for the democratization of Nigeria's secondary education to provide a larger of primary school leavers with an opportunity for better education that can cater for all aptitudes and abilities. The philosophy not only maintained that this level of education should not only be state-controlled and manned by the best qualified teachers possible but also stipulated that, there should be a closer

relationship between the secondary schools and the universities so that realistic school work is not jeopardized by the tyranny of secondary school leaving examination and university entry requirements (Alaezi, 1990). The philosophy also emerged with the view that technical and commercial secondary schools should involve commerce and industry in their curricular for the purpose of mutual benefit of all concerned.

For the purpose of meeting the above aims and objectives, the philosophy stipulated that, there should be a six year of secondary education which would be better divided into three years of junior secondary school and three years of senior secondary school that could possibly lead to four years of university education, hence the 6-3-3-4 system of education commencing from the primary school.

University Education

The philosophy endorses that, the expected roles and functions of the Nigerian Universities should include the following:

- a. Teaching (this calls for impartation of knowledge);
- b. Research (this implies the pursuit of knowledge);
- c. Development (this is associated with training for higher level and immediate manpower needs of the nation).

The philosophy endorses further that, the Nigerian universities cannot remain in an ivory tower but should and must contribute their own quota to national and international dialogue and criticism.

Teacher Education

The philosophy endorses that, teacher education in Nigeria should make provision of the following for teachers:

- a. A general education of teachers;
- b. A sound academic preparation;
- c. An adequate professional training; and
- d. A highly motivated, conscientious and successful classroom teacher.

The philosophy endorses that, all classroom teachers must be characterized by the above qualities at all levels of the Nigerian educational system. The philosophy would want to see teaching become a profession with its doors open only to qualified and well trained individuals from Teacher Training Colleges and Faculties of Education. Those with B.A. or B.Sc Honours degrees wishing to teach should take Diploma courses in education to qualify as graduate teachers. (See More Details on 'Teacher Education').

Women's Education

The philosophy endorses that, girls should have equal access to education as the boys. It maintains further that, the training of girls to fulfill their roles as women should form a common core curriculum to which all female children should be exposed. The philosophy encourages co-

education at all levels although it recognizes that, there might be objection to this in certain quarters based on some social and religious grounds.

Education for Living

The philosophy considers very seriously that, schooling should be geared to preparing the individual for the good of community as a whole. The school curriculum, according to the philosophy, should cater not only for the needs of the head but also for the needs of the hand and heart. Thus, this curriculum must reflect community realities, provide opportunities for active and meaningful participation in school work, creative activity among children and stress the respect for dignity of labour, national loyalty and consciousness.

Education for Science and Technology

The philosophy recognizes that, progress in science and technology has important, far-reaching implications for social organisations, human survival, man's place in nature, beliefs and attitudes to life. It considers that the school curriculum should be so diversified as to provide for the teaching of pure and applied sciences in secondary schools and Teaching Training Colleges. The philosophy recognizes the need for the creation of a National Science Policy to guide the training of scientists and technologists as well as research efforts in these fields.

On the whole, the philosophy of Nigerian education is largely derived from a new curriculum framework which emphasizes certain major issues including:

- a. A progressive education starting from the first year of primary education to the third year of secondary education (that is, the completion of Junior Secondary Education).
- b. The need for preparing a child for self-employment, encouraging initiative and manual work.
- c. A de-emphasis of the use of end-of-term or sessional examination as the only measure for assessing the ability of pupils. On the other hand, the philosophy advocates for a progressive guidance of the pupil through continuous assessment and counseling to form the end of his school career.
- d. Places premium on serious academic work and advocates the need for enough provision for further education either through the senior secondary school or the technical colleges or vocational courses.

Professional and Curriculum Development Vis-À-Vis Teacher Education

A conception of Teacher Education must be hinged on the view that teachers are professionals who are expected to build and or rebuild education largely through curriculum development. This task calls for an establishment of supportive conditions for teacher development. In other

words, teacher education implies a provision of adequate education for teachers which must include, among other things, curriculum development. In this regard, curriculum development derives not just from the theory behind it but also from the practical implications and demonstrations involved in the work of curriculum development. This line of thought, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980), must form the basis of teacher education of teaching is to be a profession and if educational opportunities for learners are really to be improved. Thus Foshay (1967), endorses that, the basis for construing the teacher as a professional must emanate from the idea of responsible action not only in the act of teaching but also in the act of educational leadership. Professionalism in education demands that the teachers must know how to act. Thus Foshay (1967), further expatiates that the responsible act of teaching requires that, the “teacher draws on what is known of educational practice and gathers evidence in some coherent sense or way”. The ability to synthesize this knowledge in action, according to Foshay (1967), is the hallmark of the professional teacher. Teacher education has to thrive and be essentially sustained by the criteria that:

- a. It (teacher education) has to propagate knowledge of approved practices in education.
- b. The teacher has to demonstrate in practical terms, the ability involved in implementing the said approved practices.
- c. The teacher has to display the ability to think experimentally. This criterion, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980), ranges from everyday attempt to match the task (thinking experimentally) to the learner to designing and conditioning research to solve a classroom problem. (It is important to emphasise that without a serious endorsement of the above three criteria, any building of an educational framework that will involve curriculum development and curriculum improvement will run into problems. This development implies that each education will be a farce).
- d. The teacher must also be an intelligent consumer of research.

Teacher education is linked with preparing teachers adequately for problem solving. This development implies, among other things, that teacher education must avoid schemes that capitalize on a segmental view of education since this orientation is capable of militating against a consideration of the curriculum as a continuous growth. Thus, Tanner and Tanner (1980), warn that teacher education programmes must not be used to propagate the view of an existence of a conceptual and administrative dichotomy between curriculum programmes in secondary education. The professional must see the educational development of his or her subject or specialization and deal with problems in the immediate situation in light of the curriculum as a whole (Tanner and Tanner, 1980), this orientation implies that if teachers are to become professionals, they must possess a role in generating the curriculum. (However, the same Tanner and Tanner (1980) observe that, so far, teacher education programmes have done little

to help teachers develop the necessary conceptual tools needed for generating knowledge about the curriculum).

It is worth emphasizing that if teacher education must be problem solving-oriented, it must be hinged on the availability of the necessary resources to make this development possible. Liebermann and Miller (1978:67), reveal that, teachers have always called for additional resources. Their concern is reflected thus:

What they (teachers), mean is people, time, materials and expertise in a mix that engages them, educates them, and makes their growth possible. This is not meant as sentimentally towards the teacher, but rather as dealing with where the teacher finds himself or herself isolated, cut off from ideas, not involved with adults, left usually to his or her resources to make do.

Tanner and Tanner (1980), consider that, if teacher education should be geared to problem-solving, it has to capitalize on certain variables which the teacher cannot afford to lose sight of, namely:

- a. Teachers must have time for deliberation to identify substantive problems and develop plans for action for attacking the problems; teacher education need to be oriented such that teachers are enabled to integrate theory and practice.
- b. Teachers must have the freedom to seek assistance in improving the curriculum. Outside experts, helping teachers, supervisors and peers should be available to assist teachers on invitation, responding to the teacher's expressed needs.
- c. Teachers must have materials (textbooks, library books, curriculum materials and other instructional materials) to improve teaching. Goodlad (1979), counsels that, materials and methods must be oriented continuously to the philosophy of a given school system to contribute to learning.

Teacher education has to be tailored to derive strength and substance from the benefits accruable from prevalence of a sound and excellent working relationships between teachers and prospective teachers on the one hand and administrators (principal) and supervisors on the other hand. This relationship has to be sustained on a permanent basis if teachers' involvement in curriculum development and curriculum improvement must not be impeded. Although supervision (where it exists) tends to be error-oriented, particularly errors derivable from teachers, it must not be allowed to deny professionals tending and or status to teaching. The current orientation is on teacher education that involved in building the knowledge base for his or her field. This trend in teacher education, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980), construes supervision as not only concern-focused or problem-focused but must be tailored to assist the professional teacher build this knowledge base. Thus, they have gone further to endorse that although teacher education must be geared towards teacher's professional improvement, the burden must not be thrown on the teacher's shoulders. On the other hand, teacher education needs to be

channelled at exerting positive impact on teachers and other professionals for the purpose of creating conditions for curriculum change: a development which is bound to involve teachers, administrators and supervisors. This development is designed to involve teachers in major curriculum decisions not only in school systems but also at their various levels of operation. Thus, Lindsay (1962), reveals that if decisions are to have meaning for the individual teacher and to provide direction for his work, he must be personally involved in making them. To this end, Tanner and Tanner (1980), have been prompted to submit to the view that, these thinking-patterns are of superlative importance because they have emerged not only from a new conception of teacher education but also from a consideration of the teacher as a professional in his or her own right. In their thesis, Tanner and Tanner (1980) strongly maintain that if curriculum improvement process is to be worthwhile venture, then, teachers must be treated as professionals by their administrative colleagues and supervisors. This has to become the case through a new orientation in teacher education.

The Role of Teacher Centres in Relationship to the Professional Growth of Teachers

The idea behind a development and prevalence of teacher centres must be hinged on an improvement of the curriculum and this has to depend essentially on (a) better professional preparation for teachers and (b) skilled supervision to help teachers become ever more knowledgeable and responsible decision-makers (Hollis, 1961). It follows that the function of teacher centers is largely to enable professional teachers to work more effectively in the classroom. Thus, teacher centers, according to Feiman (1977), have to focus on practical, in service education through courses, lectures and workshops, and the dissemination of curriculum materials. Tanner and Tanner (1980) observe that the increased interest in teacher centers largely stems from the theory that teachers can solve their own curriculum problems if they just have centers where they can congregate and poll their collective ideas.

On the place and role of teacher centers with reference to teacher education, Feiman (1977) has identified three types of centers, which she labeled "Behavioural", "Humanistic" and "Development". Behavioural (Behavioristic) centers perceive of the teacher as a technician and focus on the molecular aspects of teaching. These centers follow a competency-based approach which, according to Feiman (1977), is a defect orientation to in service education. These centers are largely geared to the training of teachers in the use of educational products. Feiman (1977) maintains that Humanistic centers are based on the assumption that teachers have the motivation and inner resources to improve given the kind of environment in which they will flower. Development centers, according to Feiman (1977), are concerned with helping teachers attain higher levels of understanding and improved practice by encouraging principles and assumptions. Tanner and Tanner (1980), are convinced that these centers are closets to the

Dewey, a view of professional functioning of teachers. They endorse that advisers (including other professionals such as administrators and supervisors) in developmentally oriented centers work with teachers in classrooms.

On the whole, the effectiveness of the role of teacher centers in championing the course of teacher education has to be measured in terms of whether they contribute to teachers' professional growth and an improvement in learning, thus, Yarger (1978), observe that, the present prevailing interests in teacher centers. They endorse that, this development is a probable 'positive omen' for teachers' professional development.

Levels of Teachers' Professional Performance Built into Curriculum Development

One of the basic assumptions underlying teacher education is the implication that professional teachers must be committed seriously to curriculum development. Teachers, therefore, need a guide to curriculum development, which they can use in defining their role in the processes associated with it (that is curriculum development). Thus Tanner and Tanner (1980) have offered three levels of curriculum development and are also suggesting that teachers and school systems tend to function predominantly at one of these levels. These levels include:

- a. Imitative – Maintenance Level;
- b. Mediative – Integrative Level;
- c. Creative – Generative Level.

Teachers operating at the First Level (Imitative – Maintenance) rely on textbooks, workshops and routine activities, subject by subject. Skills are treated as dead rather than means for generating further learning. Ready-made materials are used without critical evaluation resulting in multiplicity of isolated skill-development activities (The already segmental curriculum is further fragmented). The imagination of the teacher does not go beyond maintaining the status quo. This development is conspicuous in the secondary schools where curriculum development is largely confined to each departmental domain. When change is made, it is made on the adoption level, without adaptation to local needs. Curriculum development at this level is plugged in the package to the existing situation without attention to the resulting interactions. Teachers at this level tend to be left alone to struggle with innovations that are handed to them from above. Schools are turned inwards, with the principal as the sole resource for classroom assistance.

Teachers who operate at the second level (Mediative) are aware of the need of integrate curriculum content and deal with emergent conditions including societal problems. Although teachers at this level, plugged in the package to the existing situation without attention to the resulting interactions, teachers at this level tend to be left alone to struggle with innovations that are handed to them from above. Schools are turned inwards, with the principal as the sole resource for classroom assistance.

The locus of curriculum development remains at the levels of refining existing practice. However teachers prevailing at this level of curriculum development do not blindly plug in an innovation or curriculum package to the existing situation. The necessary adaptations, accommodations and adjustments are made. Thus these teachers are aware of and capitalize on a range of resources for curriculum improvement including pulpits, parents and peer and they utilize resources beyond the local school. These teachers are consumers of professional literature on approved practices and tap the resources of the university through in-service courses. The meditative level is a level of awareness and accommodation. Teachers are attracted to, and can articulate new ideas but their efforts to improve the curriculum fall short of the necessary reconstruction for substantive problem – solving.

Teachers operating at the Creative-Generative level take an aggregate approach to curriculum development. These teachers are interested in examining the curriculum in its entirety; they are consumed in asking questions of priority in order to establish relationships across curriculum packages. These teachers capitalize on an application of a macro curricular approach to curriculum development – an approach which willy-nilly requires co-operative planning by individual teachers for the purpose of achieving vertical and horizontal articulation in terms of the curriculum content that emerges from their activities. These teachers use generalizations and problems as centers of curriculum organisation. They stress the broad concepts that specialized subjects share in common, and they use and develop courses of study that cross subject fields. These constitute aggregate treatments. Teachers at this third level of curriculum development think about what they are doing and try to find more effective ways of working. They are able to diagnose their problems and formulate hypotheses for solutions. They experiment in their classrooms and communicate their insights to other teachers. Teachers at this level are consumers of research and seek greater responsibility for curriculum decisions at the school and classroom levels. They exercise independent judgement in selecting curriculum materials and adapt them to local needs. They regard themselves as professionals and, as such, are continually involved in the problems of making decisions regarding learning experiences. Thus, their antennae are turned outwards to a wide range of resources including pupils, teacher colleagues, helping teachers, supervisor, curriculum co-ordinator, parent, community resources, school principal, in service courses, outside consultants, experimental programmes, professional conferences and workshops.

Tanner and Tanner (1980), observe that although all teachers, as professionals, should operate at the third level, most teachers are probably at levels I and II. They also consider that most teachers operate at the level of imitative – Maintenance (Level I), because they are not armed with adequate resources. Tanner and Tanner (1980), also reveal that a more fundamental reason for a concentration of teachers at the first level hinges on the view

that many of them have an inadequate conception of what it means to improve the curriculum.

Teacher education must be seen as a major avenue for curriculum improvement. Engagements in curriculum development must, of necessity, provide conceptual frameworks for the teacher to perform one of his roles effectively. This particular role largely rests on the teachers' ability to make better decisions in diagnosing and solving problems and in implementing approved practices.

Approval Practices Built into Teacher Education

Teacher education has to capitalize on a body of resources which are largely constituted into a body of approved practices recognized in education as a profession. Approved practices in education constitute those practices on which recognized authorities agree are found in the literature of the field (education). Some of these approved practices may be research-based, or based on that which is of demonstrable practical success in education. For example, teacher education has to propagate the idea that, because learning occurs through a wide variety of experiences, teachers must provide a wide variety of ways to learn. Thus a teacher's repertoire of learning approaches should not be confined primarily to having pupils read the textbook and write and recite answers to questions about the textbook. Other learning approaches that are designed to provide teacher education with a broad spectrum of processes to enable the teachers handle curriculum problems effectively include observation, participation, analysis, research, experimentation, problem solving, dramatization and construction. There is a surprising number of practices in literature on which recognized authorities agree, should be built into teacher education for the purpose of enabling the professional effectively address issues which have bearing on curriculum improvement.

Curriculum Improvement as inquiry Considered within the Framework of Teacher Education

Teacher education has to be oriented to explore the benefits derivable from the findings of research so as to provide the professional teacher with a major source of knowledge for curriculum improvement. The present idea behind teacher education in the area of research is either meant to lure teachers into involvement in classroom research or orient them into becoming consumers of research. Teacher education has to be construed among other things, as a conceptual framework embracing a variety of forms of inquiry used in investigating and addressing classroom problems including an application of research findings for purposes of offering solutions to their identified problems. Tanner and Tanner (1980), observe that, although the purpose of involving teachers in research is to help them improve their own practices, research findings from classroom experimentation can contribute to theoretical knowledge about the curriculum. Teacher education is meant to provide the necessary framework

to enable professional teachers and prospective professional teacher engage themselves in 'Action Research' and 'developmental Research'. In this circumstance, 'action-research programmes' are generally designed to embrace the idea that, teacher could and should improve the curriculum through investigation into their classroom problems. Under the umbrella of 'Teacher Education'. 'Development Research' is meant to focus on teachers' classroom concerns. Developmental research is largely concerned with curriculum synthesis. In our present setting, developmental research has to be tailored towards the redirection of educational research so that problems identified by practitioners are investigated. Thus developmental research endorses the need for involving teachers in this type of research so that they could be enable to put theoretical problems.

Teacher education is currently used in an avenue for creating forums for designating teachers as researchers. Thus, as professionals, teachers are expected to be involved in the building of knowledge through research. Tanner and Tanner (1980), submit that involvement of teachers in theory and practice has enhanced better learning prospects. They advance further that developmental research should be guided by significant qualitative ideas that are relevant to the solution of classroom problems. In conducting such as research, teachers must identify their own valuations as well as the valuations underlying the relevant research literature so as to minimize bias.

Conclusion

Philosophies of education are unique to different societies depending on their values which of course keep them in harmony. The Nigerian philosophy of education is geared towards self-actualization, better human relationships and effective citizenship. These are derived from the general objectives of the nation. Thus, the political framework of Nigeria is anchored on these objectives. The political framework is a veritable strategy for the achievement of the Nigerian national goals and objectives. In all these, the teacher factor is a very crucial element in the achievement of the state's goals and objectives. Teacher education must be seen as a major avenue for curriculum achievement. Consequently, the teacher is perceived as a classroom researcher and a major source of knowledge for curriculum improvement.

References

- Ahamibe, C. (1979). *"Aims and purposes of education"* in Ukeje, B.O. *Foundations of education*. Benin City: Ethiopia Publishing Corporation.
- Alaezi, O. (1990). *The Nigerian new school curriculum: Issues and insights*. Jos: Ehindero (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Berlinger, D.C. and Gage, N.L. (1976). *The psychology of teaching methods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Cooky, S.J.S. (1969). "The meaning of education" in NERDC, *A philosophy of Nigeria education: Proceedings of the Nigerian National Curriculum Conference*. Lagos: Government Press.
- Dewey, J. (1904). *The relation of theory of practice in education*. Bloomington: Pacific School Publishing Co.
- Fieman, S. (1977). "Evaluating teacher center". *School Review*, (1), 85.
- Foshy, A.N. (1967). "Professional education: The discipline of the art": *Theory and practice*, (1), 6.
- Goodlad, J.I. (1978). *Educational leadership: Towards to third era* educational leadership, (1), 25.
- Harris, A. (1972). *Thinking about education*. London: Heinemann.
- Hollis, L.C. (1961). *Control of the curriculum in American schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hoyle, E. (1969). *The role of the teacher*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Liebermann, A. and Miller, L. (1978). "The social realities of teaching" *Teachers College Record*, (2), 80.
- Lindsey, M. (1962). "Decision-making and the teacher" in Passow, H (ed) *Curriculum Crossroads*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- O'Connor, D.J. (1975). *An Introduction to the philosophy of education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Peters, R.S. (1966). *Ethics and education*. London: Unwin University Books.
- Redle, F. and Watterber, W. (1951). *Mental hygiene in teaching*. New York: Harcourt and Brace.
- Schofield, H. (1972). *The Philosophy of education: An introduction*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Tanner, D. and Tanner, L.N. (1980). *Curriculum development: theory into practice*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- Ukeje, B.O. (1876). "Evaluating the teacher", *Nigerian Journal of Education*, (1), 4.
- Yarger, S.L. and Yarger, G.F. (1978). *And so we asked ourselves – about teacher centers: Theory into Practice*. (1), 17.