

CURRICULUM — AND — INSTRUCTION

An introduction to
methods of teaching

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Desmond P. Brown 1982

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Preface

This book has been written specifically for students in Advanced Teachers Colleges, Colleges of Education and for first-year students studying education in Nigerian universities. Practising teachers and those involved in in-service courses should also find the book useful, as well as students doing NCE by correspondence.

It follows the syllabus in Curriculum and Instruction drawn up in Zaria in 1980 by representatives of the Faculty and Institute of Education, ABU, Zaria, assisted by representatives of numerous Advanced Teachers Colleges and Colleges of Education.

Every effort has been made to cover all aspects of the new syllabus in the manner suggested by representatives at the Zaria meeting. If some topics are briefly or extensively treated, it is because the syllabus seemed to demand that kind of treatment.

Education students in Nigeria should find the book very useful in that it has been written by people who have a combined experience of over thirty years in Nigerian education and are familiar with most, if not all, of the current problems and needs.

Further reading is advised and lists of readings that are considered essential and supplementary are included at the end of each chapter.

R.N.-B.
F.E.O.
D.P.B.

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In particular we would like to thank Professor Adamu Baikie, our former head of department who brought us all to Zaria, and who is such an excellent teacher himself.

Zaria, Nigeria
March 1982

MRS R. NACINO-BROWN
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The Teaching Profession

INTRODUCTION

This book is about teaching, planning teaching strategies and learning techniques to improve teaching. It is intended for students who plan to become secondary school or Grade II college teachers but it should also prove useful even to those who never take up the teaching profession, because in most other professions and in domestic life everyone is involved to some extent in teaching those around him.

In this introductory chapter the meaning of teaching is discussed with reference to learning, education, content and method. The reasons why teaching is regarded as a profession are explained and the factors that contribute to effective teaching are introduced.

WHAT IS TEACHING?

People can preserve the achievement of their generation by passing on to their children the experience they have gained and thus enable the young to begin where they (the old) left off. Without this 'passing on' of wisdom, each generation would be compelled to begin the life of man all over again; there would be no continuity and growth from one generation to the next. Moreover, human society functions by its members performing certain roles in the community. The skills needed to perform these functions or roles do not come naturally but have to be taught and acquired through learning.

In traditional society, the task of directing the formal education of the young was the responsibility of the elders.

Social heritage, traditions and cultural values were transmitted to the young through symbolic ceremonial activities, examples and stories, which were told over and over again.

As technological and industrial developments began to influence and change the nature and values of rural and urban communities the role of teaching was passed on to professional teachers. In present day society such teachers work in schools and colleges which are the predominant teaching agencies.

Teaching and learning

What does the word *teaching* really mean and how is it related to learning? The word has often been used loosely to give the impression of a single unitary process to which a general theory could be applied. In fact teaching embraces many kinds of process, behaviour and activities that no single theory can explain adequately.

Teaching has been defined as an attempt to help someone acquire, or change, some skill, attitude, knowledge, ideal or appreciation. In other words the teacher's task is to create or influence desirable changes in behaviour, or in tendencies toward behaviour, in his students. John Dewey maintains that in order to say one has taught, some changes in student behaviour should have taken place, when he says: a person might as well say he has sold when no one has bought as say he has taught and no one has learned. This statement is probably too harsh, but it does introduce an important point: the goal of teaching is to bring about the desired learning in the students. Therefore the only valid criterion of success in teaching is the degree to which the teacher has been able to achieve this learning in his students.

Whilst it is necessary to have a learner in order to teach, it is not necessary to have a teacher in order to learn. People can and often do learn many things on their own without the aid of a teacher. In chapter five, where newer approaches to teaching are discussed, teachers are encouraged to use discovery and inquiry modes of teaching in which students learn largely through their own efforts and experiences. The teacher is still needed to organise and direct the students in those learning experiences, but they are more responsible for their own learning. The main aim of teaching as we have already

said, is learning, and the teacher has to use his imagination, experience and intuition to choose suitable content and the most effective teaching method.

Content, method and technique

Content can be described as the subject matter, ideas, skills or substance of what is taught. It is a very important part of the curriculum. Method is the manner in which the content is presented to the students. Content and method are factors closely related to teaching and are an integral part of the teaching process. In choosing a particular method a teacher might make use of special techniques to ensure more effective learning. Hence technique is a part of teaching. In chapter three the curriculum is discussed in more detail and you should find it helpful in understanding how the content of what is taught in Nigerian schools is selected. Chapters seven and eight on organising instruction and behavioural objectives will help you understand how you can plan and structure the content that is to be learned. Chapters four and five deal with methods of teaching, and chapter six with teaching techniques.

Research evidence concerning the best method of teaching has been ambiguous. There are many studies which compare one general teaching method to another, but the results are so difficult to interpret that the evidence to date gives little or no encouragement to hope that there is a single, reliable, multi-purpose approach which can be regarded as the best. Instead of searching for a single right way, we should therefore focus on the possibility of combining a variety of teaching methods to improve learning. There is at present no known single approach that can succeed with all kinds of students or achieve all instructional goals. Teaching has to be approached in variety of ways that facilitate learning or development.

Education and teaching

People's understanding of the meaning of education has changed over the past few hundred years. At one end of the scale is the older view which refers to just any process of bringing up or rearing. What is lacking in this concept is the

development of understanding and of modes of thought in the learner which are desirable. Being initiated into family or cultural traditions which involve no thinking, only memorising or copying, cannot be called education. In the same way, learning practices that are not generally considered desirable in society, like stealing or acting violently, also cannot be considered as education. The more recent and more specific concept links educative processes with the development of states of a person that involve knowledge and understanding in depth and breadth, and also suggests that they are desirable.

Education, as far as we are concerned in this book, will be considered as initiation into activities and modes of thought that are worthwhile. Education implies that a person has achieved or will eventually achieve a state of mind characterised by a mastery of and a care for worthwhile things viewed in some kind of cognitive perspective.

A trained or skilled man is not necessarily educated. Trained suggests the development of a competence in a limited skill or mode of thought, whereas educated suggests a linkage with a wider system of beliefs. In the same way teaching is not necessarily educating, because teaching and training are used synonymously. Teaching someone to type, ride a bicycle, weld metal or kick a football, with purely vocational or economic ends in view, is not educating. To educate implies giving people a wider cognitive perspective so that they develop breadth and depth in knowledge and understanding. The teaching of skills can be done in such a way as to be called educating if such skills are seen as part of a broader picture and their historical perspective, social significance and aesthetic merit are understood.

People can become educated through vicarious experiences apart from formal teaching or training. Private reading or study, travel or social contacts can be very educative. In a philosophy of education course the concept of education and its connection with teaching and training will be treated in more depth than is possible here.

Whether a person is a teacher or an educator really depends on his aims or goals. If a teacher approaches a subject from a narrow viewpoint without seeing it from a wider perspective in relation to other subjects and life itself, he could be said

to be teaching or training and not educating. For the benefit of our students we should attempt to do more than teach or train — we should educate.

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

A profession is generally considered to have certain characteristics:

1. It deals with a special field of knowledge or information.
2. Its practitioners must have had special training in the field and have demonstrated their ability by some sort of examination that tested their qualifications to serve the public in the profession and hence work for the improvement of society.
3. Its members belong to an organisation that makes provision for the licensing and certification of its members and sets up machinery for their professional growth by organising regular courses and seminars and by publishing journals.

Doctors, dentists, lawyers and engineers, to mention but a few, are considered professionals by most people. The question arises as to whether teaching is also a profession. Under (1) above teachers do specialise in particular subject areas and also study education itself in some depth. They have special training in the field, in the form of teaching practice, as required by (2) and they have to pass examinations in order to qualify as trained teachers.

In many countries there are national or state bodies to which all teachers belong. In Nigeria there exist professional organisations like the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) and the Mathematics Teachers Association of Nigeria (MAN), and most of these organisations publish regular journals as required by (3) above. In countries where private colleges and universities exist in addition to state universities, as in the USA, Canada and the Philippines, teachers must be certified or licensed to teach in addition to possessing a degree in education. In Nigeria and the UK, since all universities and

colleges of education are financed and run mainly by the respective governments or government agencies, the granting of educational qualifications by any university is considered to be certification in itself and no additional licensing is required. In-service training courses in Nigeria are arranged for teachers by State and Federal Ministries of Education and hence it would seem that teaching can also qualify as a profession under (3) above.

Why then is it that in Nigeria teachers are not universally regarded as professionals in the real sense of the word? Some of the reasons for this may be:

- (a) The employment of untrained teachers in schools and colleges, to counter the current shortage of qualified teachers.
- (b) The lack of respect and low status accorded teachers in present day society.
- (c) Some teachers failing to regard themselves as professionals and as a result not taking sufficient pride in their work.
- (d) Teachers rarely get disciplined or dismissed and hence some tend to become casual and neglect their work.

It is unlikely that the shortage of qualified teachers will become less acute in the next few years, as the number of schools is increasing and teachers are leaving the teaching profession to take up jobs which are more financially rewarding. If those remaining in teaching are going to improve their status and professional image they will have to concentrate on being more dedicated and disciplined, in other words behave more like professionals, and see to it that members who discredit the teaching profession are appropriately dealt with.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Teacher characteristics

As Douglas has pointed out, the greatest single factor in the teaching process is the teacher. No technique, no method, no device, no gadget can guarantee success — only the teacher can do this. The greatest motivating device yet discovered is the highly motivated teacher.

The characteristics of a successful teacher can be conveniently grouped under two main headings: personal and professional.

Personal characteristics

Researchers generally believe that students are the best judges of the personal characteristics of teachers. Studies indicate that in the opinion of students the most highly ranked personal characteristics are: sympathy and kindness, helpfulness, patience, a pleasing personal appearance and manner, emotional stability and self control. Lower ranked, but still considered important, were such characteristics as fairness and impartiality, a sense of humour, honesty, enthusiasm, creativeness and resourcefulness. It is impossible to be dogmatic about the way a teacher should behave towards his students in terms of the characteristics, except to say that the best teachers probably possess most of these to a fairly high degree. There are possibly as many different types of successful teachers as there are methods of teaching. As you gain in experience you will develop your own style of dealing with students inside and outside of the classroom, and it would be advisable to incorporate the above characteristics in your approach as best you can.

Possibly one of the main failings of some Nigerian teachers is a certain lack of dedication to teaching which often results in lessons not being properly prepared and planned, and teachers being absent from their classes. The rather low salaries teachers receive forces some to engage in small businesses on the side to help supplement their income. Such businesses should not result in the teachers neglecting their duties to their students. If a teacher finds that he is spending so much time on his own private enterprises that he does not have sufficient time to attend properly to his lessons and his students, it would be better for him to leave the teaching profession altogether.

A dedicated and hardworking teacher will find the job quite rewarding and can derive satisfaction from seeing former students succeed in life. Students never forget the teachers who really helped them in school and years after they will talk about them with affection and gratitude, even imitating their mannerisms. If you take up teaching you will find it a

difficult profession to practise. It can be extremely taxing and exhausting at times. Some people cannot take the life for very long and eventually give it up but not without some slight feelings of regret. D. H. Lawrence once said: 'I was, but am no more, thank God — a schoolteacher — I dreamed last night I was teaching again — that's the only bad dream that ever afflicts my sturdy existence' (*The Macmillan Treasury of Relevant Quotations*, 1980 p. 552).

Professional characteristics

No matter how kind, amiable and well meaning a teacher is he cannot possibly succeed unless he has a thorough knowledge of the subject he is teaching and a good general knowledge. On the other hand a very knowledgeable person completely lacking in sensitivity or human emotions is not likely to be successful either, especially if he behaves like an army sergeant on the parade ground. In Nigeria there are certain professional characteristics which when combined with the personal characteristics we have mentioned should help a person succeed in the teaching profession. We will merely list them here as they are dealt with in more depth in other parts of the book.

A professional teacher should have the following qualities:

- (a) A mastery of the subject to be taught.
- (b) An understanding of the basic principles of children's growth and development.
- (c) A good general knowledge.
- (d) A knowledge of methods and techniques.
- (e) A positive attitude to the work.
- (f) A willingness to adapt his or her teaching to local needs taking into account the materials available.
- (g) Courage to struggle for better standards and conditions in the school.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TEACHING

Understanding students

A theoretical knowledge of students' growth and development must be translated into a real and active effort to understand