

# REAPPRAISING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE

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## **Abstract**

The desire to move forward and keep in touch with the current trends in language teaching and learning inspired teachers to keep on going for training. The changes in the use of language created the need for changes in the trend of language teaching and learning and therefore created the need for new demand in teacher training. It is in line with this that this paper recommends effective reappraisal of teacher education for functionality and self-reliance.

Drastic revision of specific courses institution of upgraded schools, increasing provision for independent study developing programme learning materials were among the few attempts made to improve educational programme over the years. The efforts made to uplift the status of education transformed the trend in teacher development in recent years, to train teacher as an active creator of his own materials, classroom activities and so on in order for the teachers to become self directed, they are currently being trained to be self Analyst and evaluation of teaching activities. Therefore in-service and professional development programmes according to Nunan, (1989) are principally designed to train teachers on how to use externally developed syllabuses, materials and method strategically to meet the demands of teaching and learning process. This according him is as a result of the rediscovering the curriculum as the documentation and systematization of classroom practice. The aim of curriculum planners nowadays has become identification of principles of effective teaching from within the classroom. This has clearly been

indicated in classroom-oriented researches and the tremendous effort been made towards pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.

## **Background of Teacher Education**

Various government policies on education have been stated and implemented to upgrade the status of education over the years. But the resultant effect always turned out negative due to haphazard implementation of the wonderful policies. To address the problems of teaching, several teacher training programmes have been run at different levels of education. This is aimed at giving effective training to teachers to qualify them as teachers at the various levels.

Missionaries employed Standard 4 – 6 holders to teach pupils in those early times of education. The teachers at that time effectively taught under the close supervision of the proprietors. The teachers then carefully transferred the discipline instilled to them by the proprietors to the learners. The learners then, were able to copy the spirit of hard work and commitment to duty of their teachers. This encouraged the parents to send their children to school. The increase in enrolment made it necessary to have specialized trained teachers. This initiated the creation of the Church Missionary Society established in Abeokuta in 1859 called the training Institute (Isyaku, 1999). It was later followed by the Baptist Training College in Ogbomosho in 1897. Since then, more training colleges were established in other parts of the country, some of which later

transformed into Colleges of Education and Universities. These training colleges equipped teachers with quality instruction, moral training as well as religious education. The trained teachers therefore busied themselves in developing the conscious of learners toward national unity and a standard instruction.

The Ashby commission which indicated the need to establish a middle level school higher than teacher training school led to the foundation of Yaba Higher College in 1965. The report also ordered the establishment of Grade II Teachers' Colleges. These colleges later transformed into colleges of education and universities.

The three levels of teacher training what were established. These are

1. Grade II teachers who are specifically trained for primary schools.
2. The Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) holders trained in colleges of education to teach secondary school learners and;
3. The graduate teachers trained in universities and awarded degrees to teacher at higher level of learning.

Later in 1999, another level of teacher training was added due to the emergence of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. It is named Product of Pilot Teachers Training Programme (PTTP). This is specifically designed to train teachers to meet up with the expected upsurge in primary school enrolment in response to the new policy.

Most recently the federal government decreed that from 2000, the NCE would be the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. Therefore this led to the wiping out of Grade II teachers training and made NCE holders to teach at primary school level.

### **Current Development in Teacher Education**

Hargreaves and Fullen (1992) stated that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. They further

stated that in addition to implementing the curriculum, teachers define and refine, interpret and transform the curriculum in an attempt to stimulate and sustain learning. It is a common belief that no nation rise above its teachers. Therefore teacher's professional development is very essential to the educational development of any nation. The need for effective and constant training has since been realized as paramount to the development of their knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

Several teacher training programmes were designed to help teachers attain professionalism. Such opportunities were open to teachers to grade their status while on the job or before job acquisition. Thought-provoking activities are organized for teachers to undertake such as courses, talks with experts or colleagues, observation and classroom research, journal production, workshops and seminars etc.

Some basic principles for teacher development programmes were proposed for post experience or in-service programmes. This, according to Nunan (1989) is because teachers are looking for guidance in solving problems which confronts them in the classroom. Therefore, he emphasized the need for explicit link between the content of professional development programme and the classroom

- (i) content and methodology should be perceived as being personally relevant;
- (ii) theory should be derived from practice;
- (iii) approach should be bottom-top rather than top down;
- (iv) teachers should be involved in the structuring of professional development programmes.
- (v) content should as far as possible, be derived from the teachers themselves;
- (vi) desirable practice should be modeled in the professional development programme;
- (vii) tasks should be given a prominent place in pre- and in-service professional development programmes designed to

introduce participant to principles of curriculum design and development.

He further stated that one of the most effective ways of incorporating the principles into teacher development programmes is to use input from teachers themselves.

One of the ways is to give all workshop participants some input prior to the workshop and ask them to design tasks and get their students carryout the tasks while they record it. During the workshop such tasks will be described in line with the goal, activities, learner and teacher roles and evaluation. Based on the discussions, similarities and differences will be looked at and suggestions as to how and why these came about could be made.

He further stated that in professional development workshops, teachers could be made to identify some issues, problems or questions which they could investigate and report back using small-scale investigation in their classroom. This will encourage teachers to adopt an action research orientation to their work.

### **Redirecting Teacher Training toward Functionality and Self Reliance**

Functional education, according to Zeilberger (1999) is the education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. It is seen as an undirected, automatic or natural education. In Western Europe, according to Zeilberger, it is described as the education that comes from the child's needs and that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. Its purpose is to develop the third world to practically develop itself in the present and future needs.

This by implication, suggests that teacher training needs to keep in tune with the current demand of functional language learning. The teacher therefore need to be given thorough and reprocess training on how to creatively busy

himself in organizing and participating in teacher development groups and association. This will enable him to rub minds with other teachers by opening up discussions and meaningfully exchange ideas. From such get-togethers, teachers will develop ideas on how to meaningfully and functionally use their knowledge to create avenues that will generate income for them. Scrivener (2003) reaffirmed that the first important step towards becoming a better teacher involves an increased awareness about what you do now and openness to the possibility of change.

He further stated that development of teachers begin when the training courses are finished. This, according to him, is because training opens up the teachers to more challenges and opportunities. It stimulates him to try ideas read in magazines, write thought provoking articles, start a local newsletter, aspire to attend conferences, seminars and workshops, give talks about something the teacher is working on, learn beautiful teaching strategies and experiences, agree to engage in monitoring with colleagues, organize similar for colleagues, get involved in some in-service, start his own school, give private lesson, write message for website, write a book or article, read these books again and again. All these are strategic ways through which knowledge of language gain through training can be used to achieve functional education and alleviate poverty. Engaging in productive development of language skills/knowledge such as the above raises the teacher's qualities and increases their awareness of participation.

Broadly speaking, teacher education training need to be redirected in a functional way. This could be done by connecting all the training with specific needs and roles towards which the teacher's duty should be directed. In this way, the teacher will gain productive knowledge and develop practical means of using

their language knowledge in creating awareness for sourcing money.

Efforts are being made nowadays to provide functional training that is meant to provide practical mastery of the subject. Typical examples are the Millennium Development Programmes (MDP) the Continuing Professional Development Programmes (CPD) etc. These programmes are set out to train teachers towards practical mastery of the subject. This is to enable them manipulate the knowledge innovatively.

Dewey holds that the idea that nothing is constant and therefore, education should positively change an individual for good. He reaffirmed that education should be geared towards making an individual useful to himself and the society at large. To achieve this good change in an individual, there is the need to motivate him to positively change at his own pace. This reaffirms the view of Scrivener (2003) who maintained that changes though risky, is inevitable. For one not to grow stale, he needs to remain open to the possibility of changes. Therefore the most important step towards functional development of teachers is increased awareness about what they do now and development openness to the possibility of change. Therefore, teachers on training are expected to achieve effective knowledge and skills needed in daily productive activities in language that will alleviate poverty and improve life style. Teachers need to be ready to use the knowledge skills and beliefs that language learning brings to solve practical problems in everyday living.

### **Conclusion**

It has widely been recognized that poverty and illiteracy are interrelated and that education is one of the most efficient ways of empowering the poor. Therefore, to empower the poor, strong will and effective administrative mechanism are very important. It is suggested that joint cooperation between policy makers,

administrators at different levels, specialist in both planning and implementation (teachers) and the representative of the society is needed to achieve this goal. These bodies need to know the child's interests and the changes he undergoes and gear their decision towards training the language teacher along those needs and changes.

### **Recommendations**

Functional education emphasized the all round development of basic skills and the effective use of these skills in individual development and societal improvement (Wikipedia, 2003). Therefore teacher education should be aimed at conducting training for teachers to undertake various language tasks productively and practically in order to reduce poverty and improve quality of life. The training should be geared towards empowering teachers to use their knowledge productively. Therefore language knowledge should be used productively in script writing, extensive creative writing, comedian use of language etc.

Various training programmes should be set up to meet the different learners' need in the society. For example, giving training teachers for entrepreneurship where they could show case their ideas for sale, organize workshops for training teachers to use language knowledge in creating job opportunities in training colleges. The workshop should be centered on educating participants with the knowledge, skills, basic language strategies and protection of ideas participant should be encouraged to actively participate in identifying language problems, making plans collectively on teaching and learning productive aspect of language and sharing strategic experiences. The participant should be innovated to be engaged in group learning activities and use language knowledge, skills and ideas learned from the workshops effectively and productively by producing newsletters, scripts, books, journals, etc.

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