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Teacher Education and Educational Reforms Through Persuasive Language

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Teacher education is seen as a programme or programmes put in place for the training of educators or teachers for the realization of the educational needs of a country. Nigeria as a nation once had Teachers Training Colleges designed to produce the desired manpower need for primary education. Later, the College of Education saddled with the responsibility of awarding the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and Faculty of Education was created in various Nigerian universities. Currently, NCE is regarded as the least certificate any teacher could have.

However, people are daily interested in new education theories that offer "new insights into the ways students learn and retain knowledge" (p.2 of 2) as stated by Andy Calvin. These changes necessitate curriculum change or reforms meant to take care of the aspirations, and projections of the country.

This is why Griffin (1994): who limited his definition of curriculum to content and process specifically designed to prepare teachers, suggested that it is helpful to view curriculum as educational interventions. He goes on to argue that curriculum developers should give considerable attention to making such intervention.

Educational Reforms

Mairi Robinson (1999) Chambers

21st Century Dictionary defines reformation as "the art or process of reforming or being reformed; improvement; amendments; (p.1171). Mairi Robinson (1999) moves on to define reform as "to improve or remove faults from (a person, behaviour etc). To improve (a law, institution, etc) by making changes or corrections to it" (p.1171).

From the aforementioned therefore, educational reform could be seen as the act of improving the educational laws, as it affects Teachers' education, correcting the shortcomings if there is any, and improving on it to meet with the challenges of the present, taking the future into consideration.

The 21st century is an era of great technological advancement. Globalization is the word in every sphere of human discussion. New ways of doing things easily and effectively emerge every day. David Williams (1990) in *English Language Teaching: An Integrated Approach* puts it this way:

The teacher of English to speakers of other languages needs to have knowledge of a variety of approaches to second or foreign languages teaching. He should be familiar with established methods and

acquainted with new ones. He should be able to decide what to preserve and what to reject in traditional and innovative teaching styles. He must determine what is suitable or possible, given the cultural and socio-economic setting in which the English Language is being taught. He should be equipped to select, from the vast number of available choices, the method that is most appropriate for his students, himself and his teaching environment (p.1).

David Williams as cited above talks about teachers of English for example being "familiar with established methods and acquainted with new ones. What to preserve and what to reject in traditional and innovative teaching style." This brings us to the fact that change is a continuum in life. It is the only thing that is permanent. Gary P. De Bolt (1996) citing Guyton and McIntyre puts it succinctly thus:

There continues to be need for a research to examine alternative models of experiences at all levels of teacher development. We need to examine what might be instead of just looking at what is (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990 p.518), (p.157).

The need to examine the various alternative models of human experiences is to ensure that the teacher is not left out of the scheme of things. Associate Professor Peter O. Ikoya, Department of Educational Administration and Policy

Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, began his Lead paper presented at the Annual National Conference of the School of Vocational Education, College of Education, Warri, Nigeria from the 8th to 11th October, 2007, thus:

As the revolving globe towards the 2015 target millennium development year gradually gains momentum, nations are getting more concerned about global capacity to achieve pre-set goals. National, international as well as regional policy makers and managers are frantically searching for structures, institutions and instruments that would enhance efficient realization of the millennium development goals.

Professor Peter O. Ikoya above authenticates Guyton and McIntyre (1990) as cited by Gary P. DeBolt (1996,157). To achieve Developmental Goals or Millennium Development Goals, educational reforms are carried out and teachers and Teacher's education need a reappraisal for effectiveness. The millennium goals are realizable through Education. And language remains an inevitable means of passing information.

Diez, M. E. (1995) in a paper entitled "Who Will Prepare the Next Generation of Teachers?" and presented at the National Congress on Teachers Education, Washington D.C. talks about challenges which modern teachers face. Diez posits these challenges thus:

1. To understand the role of the teacher

in society and the abilities needed to work effectively with all learners.

2. To ground the preparation process in a conceptual framework that incorporates the knowledge bases for learners centred education (including critical frameworks drawn from social, psychological, cultural and philosophical studies).
3. To provide an experiential developmental process that is designed to develop the knowledge, dispositions and performances required for effective practice (using for example, the INTASC principles).
4. To create experiences that model the kind of learning environment we want the next generation of teachers to create for the students.
5. To provide a broad range of experiences that model effective practice with diverse population.
6. To use assessment as a learning tool to provide feedback to candidates and develop in them habits of life-long reflection (Diez, 1995, pp.16-18)

Apart from the above-mentioned challenges as postulated by Diez (1995), James Baldwin gives another dimension to the challenges teachers face today. Baldwin (1998) did say "we are living in a very dangerous time. Everyone is aware of that, we are in a revolutionary situation... the society in which we live is desperately manacled" (p.3). Perhaps we might add that we live in a rebellious moment.

There are stories of students shooting teachers and fellow students in Western schools. And in Nigeria we have seen

teachers being abused and insulted by students. Some teachers have been beaten up by parents. In the Niger Delta for instance, the youths' agitation for a meaningful share of the proceeds accruing from the sale of oil makes the environment a volatile one. Hence teachers who must teach in these areas need to use language persuasively and this is the main preoccupation of this paper.

Gary O. DeBolt (1996) *Processes Reflections and Implication* in Ed. John McIntyre and David M. Byrd *Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers the Field Experience*, talks about what the teachers Education should ensure.

Teachers education must provide high-quality experiences at each step along the path to becoming a teacher. Part of the challenges is to look for ways to provide these high-quality experiences at a time when we are facing shrinking resources college-based and school-based teacher educators must work collaboratively to ensure the positive development of promising new teachers (p.156).

Language

Chambers 21st Century Dictionary adopted by Mairi Robinson (1999) sees Language as:

any formalized system of communication, especially one that uses sound or written symbols which the majority of a particular community will readily understand the speech

and writing of a particular nation or social group (p.764).

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners International Student Edition (2002) sees language thus: "the method of human communication using spoken or written words." (p.798).

The above definitions show that language is a means of reaching out to others; letting others know what is going on, and being informed about happenings around one. D.A. Wilkin (1982) corroborates the above by positing that:

Language is a means of communication. Although not the only form of communication among human beings, it is certainly the most important... Our entire elaborate social structure is mediated through language, and it is inconceivable that we could have constructed so complex a social interaction if we had not had spoken, and latterly, written language at our disposal. Language is central to human experience and if we are to understand the process by which men communicate with one another, we must look closely at the human capacity for language and at the particular qualities of language which enable it to play so powerful a role within us and between us (p.1).

A critical examination of D.A. Wilkin's posit on language above shows the

centrality of Language in human relation. In Wilkin's words, Language "is certainly the most important," and it plays "so powerful a role within us, and between us." This therefore, explains the centrality or position of Language in Teacher's Education and Educational Reforms in Nigeria in the 21st Century aimed at producing the kind of teachers who will make teaching and learning in Nigeria an interesting exercise that all and sundry will delightfully engage in. That Language remains a very vital and inevitable tool in teachers' education and educational reforms is what this paper intends to achieve.

The Relevance of Language in Teacher's Education and Educational Reforms

Language is very relevant in teachers Education and Educational Reforms. Baldeh (1990,p3) did say that:

English Language was thus institutionalized as the language of government, education, commerce, industry, law and administration. Thus, to obtain a lucrative job in the public or private sector, a pass in English was a necessary prerequisite. To be educated was, in the eyes of many, to be versed in English Language.

English Language is very relevant in teacher's education because the language is already institutionalized. It is the language of education, commerce, and governance .Like Okoh (1995) would say "in Nigeria, its crucial and unifying influence in the face of over 400 indigenous Languages has been widely acknowledge" (p. VII). We have over 400

indigenous Languages in Nigeria. This is one of the reasons for the emergence of English as the Language of education. And its statutory role in education makes it an inevitable instrument for the realization of the educational goals of the country, Nigeria. Hence Idegwu Clement (1997) talking about technological development states that "a nation that is static is no country. In a world of technological advancement, a mastery of English Language is a tool or vehicle needed for the attainment and sustenance of technological breakthrough" (p.350).

Idegwu's statement above is based on the fact that Language remains a viable means of educating a people. And in Nigeria, a country of over four hundred languages, English has been adopted as the official language of the people. English is the language of governance, business, commerce, and education. This is why technological transfer is hinged on it's mastery in Nigeria.

Okoh (1995) gives credence to it talking about:

the crucial role of Language in any quest for technological advancement. It is the government's recognition of the problem that gave birth to a venture such as Comskip (acronym for communication skills in English project) an undertaking jointly sponsored by the Federal Government/NUC and ODA/British Council between 1988 and 1992. In its enunciation of the objective, the document formally establishing

the project specifically calls attention to the necessity of raising the student's level of English usage to improve the communication skills in English of the students in order to increase the effectiveness of manpower development and technological transfer through undergraduate education, (p.5).

Above, Okoh gives a vivid explanation of the role of Language in the technological development of a nation. What is teacher's education and educational reforms in modern Nigeria if not to meet up with the technological advancement of the world. Teacher's education and educational reform have to take into cognizance the technological needs of the nation. This is because as teachers, they are to be saddled with the task of teaching our children, the future leaders of our society. One who has to reform others has to be well informed, and the way to ensure this is through education. To educate our children for the effective management of their lives, the present and that of the future, the teachers of these children have to be adequately prepared for the task. John O' Hair and Dan O' Hair (1996) simply put it thus:

Communication constitutes the essence of field experience in education because it under girds the formation of teaching and learning, translate emotion and perception into actions and sets the stage for personal growth and professional development. Communication serves as the adhesive connecting what we

understand as good teaching with the actual practice of good teaching. The study of field experiences in education, in turn, necessitates a focus on communication because communication is the sine qua non of teaching and learning (p.162).

Diez (1995) as stated above points out certain challenges which teachers face. These challenges, the fact that we live in a society that resists change and that language, and English Language in particular is the medium of instruction calls for how it can be effectively used to get the desired result. This section of this discourse attempts to critically examine how language when persuasively used makes teacher education and educational reforms a huge success.

Idegwu (2004) defined persuasion as: a careful and systematically planned explanation whose sole aim is to get an audience to accept some beliefs. Persuasion is indeed an unwritten, articulated or verbal communication which attempts to cause a voluntary, a non-compulsory change in judgement (p.63).

Hans P. Guth (1989) in *The Writer's Agenda* corroborates Idegwu (2004) above. Guth says that persuasion is "the act of changing the reader's mind and readers ways."

Language persuasively used becomes necessary because of the temperament of this age of restlessness. Ezekiel Mphahlele (1982) vividly explains it

when he said we "are concerned with the predicament of man in a hostile environment and with the sickness that we all see in highly developed societies (p VII-VIII).

The resolution of the crises of life in a hostile environment drums the relevance of Language in teacher, and child education showing how indispensable, language is. This is because we use language to communicate our ideas, to instruct and to understand written and verbal instructions, to show our discomfort, and to show appreciations. Most of the things we do in life are hinged on the use of language, hence it is of great relevance to our development.

M.A. Izuagie (1989) posits that:

Language appears to be the sole instrument of mental "locomotion" in which cultural images and concepts are freely reflected (p.85).

Conclusion

In conclusion, teacher education and educational reform using persuasive language approach is hinged on the fact that to achieve the millennium development goals, the nation's teacher education needs to be evaluated, and reforms carried out. Modern teachers are faced with challenges that never existed in the past. The fact that we live in a computer age, and an era in which children are prone to various acts of atrocities make reforming teacher education a must. Andy Carvin, fill//A://Education Reform History htm puts it this way: