FREIREAN VIEW OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES AND CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper elucidated Freirean view of educational practice: a case against contemporary education in Nigeria. The kind of education practiced in Nigeria, the way it is articulated and presented to the citizens is seen as a proof of sustainable development of the nation. This is because education has the potential to instill in the citizens the acceptable way of life; self-discovery of the individual and for the betterment of the nation at large. That is, only if the extant contemporary education in Nigeria enables the educational practice, that is not just an activity but one that promotes learning from one level to another to be worthwhile. Contemporary education along with other vestiges of colonialism has its roots in European authoritarian pedagogies that accentuate the dichotomy between the expertise of the master and the ignorance of the novice is an age long system that predates John Dewey. However, Freirean educational practice that is anchored on banking education was founded on a tripod stand of democratic education, ontological vocation and praxis. It was articulated to bring about change in the deficiencies inherent in the contemporary education in Nigeria. Hence, this paper lends itself to the exposition of Freirean educational practice and how it will ameliorate some deficiencies noted in the contemporary education. It postulated that contemporary education forms the basis for

generating ideas which seem to have fallen short of proffering solution to societal problems. The concepts of "education", "educational practice"; Freirean educational practices and contemporary education were articulated. The paper examined teacher-centered model, learner-centered model and content-centered model as not befitting for contemporary education. The paper observed that with the application of Freirean philosophy of education, pragmatic change will be made in our extant educational practices. Way forward was conjectured based on the observations made in the work.

Key words: Education, Educational Practice, Freirean Educational Practice and Contemporary Education

Introduction

The proof of sustainable development of any nation lies wholesomely on the kind of education they practice; and the way it is articulated and presented to the citizens. This is because education has the potential to instill in the citizens the acceptable way of life; self-discovery of the individual and for the betterment of the nation at large. In line with this thought, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in the National Policy on Education sees education as an instrument *par excellence* for effecting national development. This informs why education, according to Enemuo (2002) is viewed as the greatest instrument that transforms the mind of youths and makes them valuable citizens of nations. For R. S. Peters as posited by Anzer (2013), education is the process of transmitting what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it, be they educators or educands. It is deducible from the foregoing that education is not only an experience that helps to impart on the minds, behaviour and physical ability of all that are exposed to it, but the transmission of what is worth it, insofar as education is concerned by all and sundry who are committed to it, especially the teachers and students through educational practices.

Educational practices are not just activity, but one that promote learning from one level to another. In view of this, educational practices can be used to refer both to an activity undertaken in other to acquire certain capacities and skills and to an activity which demonstrates that the said competencies and skills (if actually acquired) have been acquired, (Quintilian, 1920). In other words, educational practice connotes, but not limited to teacher's application of activities and practice that could lead to equipping human being to become who they ought to be, not in a vacuum but in a society. This is what Vygotsky (1978) terms Zone of proximal development (ZPD). For Freire (1994), any educational practice that is not anchored on democratic (dialogic) education, ontological vocation (the call of humanization, the call to *be human*) and critical theory (otherwise known as praxis; insofar as praxis qua praxis is the calling to expose the contradiction between the principle of equality and reality of inequality, Freire, 1994) can only be seen as disconnect. Freire's view seems to fall in line with the thought of FRN (2004) whose value of educational practices underlie the following:

  i.   respect for the worth and dignity of the individual,

ii.   faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;

iii.   moral and spiritual principle in inter-personal and human relations,

iv.   shared responsibility for the common good of society;

v.   promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and

vi.   acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (being qua being). In the researchers' view, the above seems to be lacking in our contemporary educational practices. Be that as it may, it will be necessary to elucidate some concept inherent in this study before we proceed, for coherence and clarity to ensue.

Conceptual Clarification
Concept of Education
Education is undeniably the major backbone of the development of any society as it inculcates in the individual, the ability and acceptable behavior to be a vital instrument in inter-human relation and nation building. It enriches peoples' understanding of personhood (being-a-person) and human qua being by drawing out the good qualities embedded in them for the benefit of other individuals and society at large (Freire, & Faundez, 1989). Concurring, World Bank (2011) noted that education raises people's productivity, creativity with matching humanism that enhances entrepreneurship and technological advancement for sustainable development. Enemuo (2002) as well observed that education has always been a central mechanism for transmission of skills and values for the sustenance of societies and promotion of effective social change. Enemuo further states that this process starts from birth to death. In line with the above thought, Onwuka (2018) maintains that education is a means of transmitting culture and mores of a given society from one generation to another. In other words, education makes a complete man and man makes a society.

Education is conceived as a powerful agency which is instrumental in bringing about the desired changes in the social and cultural life of a nation. Ogunna as reported by Okemakinde (2013) believes that education helps to cushion the effect of high rate of literacy, emancipate the masses from the shackle of ignorance, equipping them with cognitive skills for critical thinking to induce development. With education the author continued, the individual will have the skill and intellect to understand the political, economical and social terrain in the society and then the acceptable behavior to channel them in the right trajectory for development. Education instills in an individual the awareness of being-a-human and value for teamwork to develop teaming human resources, train caliber of children imbued with skills for productivity. In the same vein, Weje in Uwaifo (2009) opines that education unlocks the door of modernization and sustainable development. By implication, education is a means to an end because it appears that little or nothing can be achieved without it.

A well formed mind, a well shaped human personality; a rounded and complete man which will result in a well formed society can only but come through education. Fafunwa as

enunciated in Onwuka (2018) wholeheartedly agrees with the above assertion. Fafunwa believes that education is the aggregate of all procedures by which the learner develops the abilities, attitudes, and acceptable moral behaviour that is welcomed in the society they live. It means that education can be seen as a process of imparting knowledge, skill and worthwhile moral values into the child for the development of the society. Concurring with the above view, Grub (2007) posits that the measure of any country's development depends on the number of its educated citizens. It cannot be out of place to pointedly state that it is the priority of teachers to ensure that students receive worthwhile, wholesome and dialogic education through effective educational practices.

Educational Practices
Educational practice is used to refer to both the activities and strategies undertaken in order to acquire competencies and skills. Enemuo (2002) noted that there must be a platform (teaching practice) to prove that, indeed, the competencies and skills have actually been acquired. In the view of Ezedike (2009) educational practice involves multiple agents and their interaction in the classroom as a system. In other words, the process can be manifested in diverse formats and structures. However, Ezedike noted that the effectiveness of educational practice can be manifested in different formats and structures insofar as such effectiveness can be influenced by numerous factors both internal and external to the classroom. That means that educational practice should be seen in teachers' competence which cannot be quantified without manifesting in students. For Mezieobi, Nwanekezi and Okoli (2011), as far as educational practice is concerned, the teacher who is seen as projector of knowledge needs to be properly educated, trained and guided for professional efficiency in oder to inculcate a positive attitude that will enable students become outstanding for the benefit of the society. Little wonder (FRN) 2014 states that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

In view of the above, some authors noted that educational practices can be seen as composition of diverse instructional processes which differ from one another by the diversities of specialized activities, (Afolabi & Adesope, 2010). Concurring, but with slight difference from the above proposition, Armstrong (2016) states that educational practice can be referred to as general principles and management strategies used by the teacher for classroom instruction for the benefit of students who have the instructional needs. Armstrong further notes that the educational philosophy, nature of classroom, subject area among others is very phenomenal in educational practices. To this end, any educational practice adopted to impart knowledge on students is occasioned by objectives to be achieved, *ceteris peribus (other things been equal).*

Educational Practice in Freirean View
No formidable educational practice can ever thrive without taking a significant cue from the theories of philosophers of education of antiquity and contemporary ones. Such great mind in whose theories in philosophy of education in contemporary time has made remarkable impart over the years includes but not limited to the Brazilian philosopher and

political educator, Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Freire is one of the main 'catalysts' of educational innovation and transformation in the second half of the century. Paulo Freire became internationally known in the 1970s for being the first person to create a method of literacy specifically for adult education and by implementing it first in Brazil and later in other Latin America and African countries. The intent of Freire borders on a decolonial project on dismantling antidemocratic, anti-dialogic, and authoritarian schooling by initiating an entirely new project of liberation education within communities and beyond.

This educational practice was anchored on banking education. It was founded on a tripod stand of democratic/dialogic education, ontological vocation and praxis. It was Elias (1994) who states that Freire's analysis of banking education as destructive of human freedom is close to being the classic criticism of all didactic and teacher-centered forms of education.

In any case, at the core of banking education (generally known as the traditional education) is what Freire call the 'narrative character' of authoritarian teaching. This, according to Freire (1994) is a relationship that involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). In the traditional education setting the relationship between instructor and student is clearly asymmetrical, with the teacher desiring total control over the 'learning' process. For Freire such teacher-student relation as delineated above is predicated on a curriculum that describes as 'lifeless, listless and petrified.' Enunciating the proposition above, Freire (1994) states that banking education is thus life-denying, and the banking educator described as a "necrophiliac". In other words, it is the kind of education that leads students to memorize mechanically the narrated content, as opposed to creatively and critically posing questions and offering original interpretations. Banking education in this regard attempts to minimize the students' creative power and inhibits their credulity. In banking education there is no recognition of thinking, no collective inquiry by the student because the world is presented by the educator as 'completed.' Thus the banking educator (the teacher) is teaching at the proverbial 'end of history,' an epoch ushered in by the so-called triumph of capitalism which seems not to have atrophied in our contemporary education. The practice whose main objective is to reinforce this ideological claim by 'teaching' the students to be passive, and thereby "transforms them into receiving objects, (Freire, 1994). Deducible from the above is that the students in the banking model are reduced to 'containers' or 'receptacles' to be filled with 'knowledge,' the 'facts' of the world *as it is*.

Similarly, education as a result becomes an act of deposition, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is simply and squarely a 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only insofar as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits is concerned. Corroborating the above, Dewey (1998) reveals that the domesticating outcomes of a 'teaching' that is intent on pacifying students. Whereas

Dewey and Freire demand a learning environment that allows students to experiment, to create, to invent knowledge; aerate themselves; and to inquire through dialogic interaction, the domesticating system of schooling reinforces what Freire calls in Pedagogy of the Oppressed "the ideology of oppression, which according to Freire negates dialogic education and the process of inquiry, (Freire 1998).

In view of this, the reason for Freirean liberation project is to confront and destruct the contradiction at the heart of the asymmetry and then reconstructing the teacher-student relationship. By so doing, reconciling the divergent poles of the contradiction of the liberatory educational context is to produce a democratized classroom where power is circulating dynamically, with no party capable of claiming control over the movement of learning that is propelled by freedom, (Freire 1994). In other words, the teacher is liberated, the students are empowered. The newly liberated teacher who also encounters himself anew becomes aerated. Freire and Shor (1987) noted that, together, the teacher and students recognize the production of knowledge as a joint effort, a collaborative and collective work. All members of the dialogic learning community "are simultaneously teachers and students", although, the implementation of this pedagogical feat is one of struggle. This is because an education for liberation, collaborative and collective effort as a reality is really a process, undergoing constant transformation. That is, liberation is the human expression of a primordial dynamic process to becoming a human, as long as human is meditated, by extension, ontological vocation.

No doubt, the work of the liberation educator is (thus first and foremost one of) calling the students into what Freire calls their humanization. Teaching according to Freire and Faundez (1989) is vocational and vocative, a calling of students to their ontological vocation to be free as being-human. Its concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an *ontological possibility*, but as an historical reality and ahistorical reality. More so, as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization they may ask if humanization is a viable possibility, (Freire, 1998). To compel a deduction from the above, objectively, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompletion. But while humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the former is the *people's vocation, the latter is far from human*. Although, this vocation is constantly negated, it is affirmed by that very negation, it is far from contemporary education, (Freire 1994).

Contemporary Education
Contemporary education or rather traditional classroom along with other vestiges of colonialism has its roots in European authoritarian pedagogies that accentuate the dichotomy between the expertise of the master (instructor) and the ignorance of the novice (student) is an age long system that predates John Dewey. The above validates Dewey's claim that the subject matter of education consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore, the chief business of the school is to

transmit them to the new generation, (Dewey, 1998). The teacher-centered, learner-centered and the content-driven are some of the concocted methods of traditional system of education the west presented to us.

The teacher-centered method of teaching is a notable concept in contemporary educational practice. Teacher-centered method of instruction is also known as the traditional model or lecture method. Here, the teacher assumes the position of "king of kings", authority in the subject matter and the person who the students must look upon for learning. In Freirean view, this is nothing but the 'narrative character' of authoritarian teaching, (Freire, 1994). Freire further states that "this relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)". Here in the traditional education setting the relationship between instructor and student is asymmetrical; with the teacher desiring total control over the 'learning' process.

As a result, the teacher is looked upon as an expert or an authority by the learner and as such is at the center of the teaching and learning processes, determining what to be learned, how it will be learned and when it will be learned with the learner being more or less actively involved in the learning process. To learn what is presented by the 'master' (the teacher), that is presented (whether good or bad), to the 'servant', (the student) has no option but to swallow the content line, hook and sinker. In the word of Onwuka (2018), the language used here is such to communicate with the 'master' (the teacher). This system is believed to predispose the learner to being passive and a total recipient of knowledge from the teacher who is seen as the master. For this reason, the model is argued to inhibit to a great extent, the personhood and life-hood of the learner as it does not give learners the appropriate environment required to develop as normal human beings. This model has always denigrated the students, disregarding their existence as humans (insofar as human is concerned) that can equally contribute to the learning process. Such pedagogy may have shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered but the supposed change is like new wine in an old bottle.

Learner-Centered
Learner-centered model is another kind in educational practice. In this type, teaching and learning process seemingly revolves around the learner with the teacher playing the role of a guide and supervisor, a resource person who rather than as an authority as in the case of a teacher-centered model play the role of a facilitator. For Fung (2015), the learner-centered model is taken to be of great help in achieving high quality learning because the learner seems to be given a sense of human being who could participate in the process of teaching and learning. In the real sense, this claim does not hold water because of what Freire (1994) calls ubiquitous neglect of personhood of the learner. The implication of the above is that the teacher (master) in the old system has obviously boxed the learner in a corner as a *hoiporloi* (servant) who may not unshackle themselves, but resign to self-pity. Here, the students may aerate themselves again even as they are engaged in a dialogue and other

engagements that could nudge them to participate in solving academic problems. Even at that, Wright (2011) posits that learner-centered method of educational practice can increase the learners' opportunity to actively participate in the class activity and other outdoor activities; they may not do it because in their mind, they are seen as underlings that cannot but take orders from the 'master'. The method could (once in a while) bring about room for discussion, discovery and inquiries. This can be effective, only when the mind of these students have been unshackled from the chain of intimidation that have them held from time immemorial, that is only if content-centered model can lend a hand.

Content-Centered model

Content-centered model is another category in educational practice. In this category, the teacher and the learner are supposed to participate fully in it, without dehumanization of any sort. Makokha and Ongwao (1997) argued that objectively, the information, skills and activities in this model is considered as sacrosanct for the both party. This is because the teacher (as far as the content is concerned) as well as the student is a learner. Hence, as the teacher is teaching, they are also learning. Content is the point of contention here, any other thing insofar as teaching is concerned is seen as secondary. Elias (1994) and Freire and Shor (1987) lashed a serious criticism on this method, because of its relegating other interests and activities that could be paramount to the teacher and the learner in the teaching learning process. They contend that content cannot be learnt in isolation of other arms like questioning, reinforcement and rewarding. When such is allowed, the teacher and the learner are therefore left with no alternative to employ other activities outside the main content of learning area. For Freire (1998), this is seen as an obstacle that discourages and impedes on the development of students as human beings. Content-centered model is however paramount in traditional method of educational practice of contemporary Nigeria.

Conclusion

In sum, educational practice in contemporary Nigeria which has its root in the European pedagogy has not in any way helped our extant educational system as it is today. The reason for the above assertion is not far-fetched. It is because the kind of education they brought to us is not an education for liberation and acknowledgement of human-hood. It is not democratic, it is not dialogic (for crying out loud how can 'you' dialogue and interact with your master), and it is not a discovery education. Such education can only be said to be de-humanizing and de-facing in its entirety. What is more, we can change it, only if we are conscientious in our desideratum to make the change especially now that we have noted it as a need at this peculiar time.

Way Forward

It became imperative to advance some way forward after the elucidation above;

1. Contemporary educational practice in Nigeria should be based on Freirean liberation philosophy of education of dialogic education and education for ontological vocation if we want to be at par with the 22nd Century educational ideas.

2. Organize seminar for teachers at all level to meet the demand of Freirean liberation philosophy of education to produce teachers that will be 'do-tanks' as against the old method, 'think-tanks'
3. The migre annual budget of education sub-sector should be increased in order to create an enabling environment where such Freirean idea above can blossom.
4. Teachers should as well see themselves as co-learners, rather than omniscient.

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