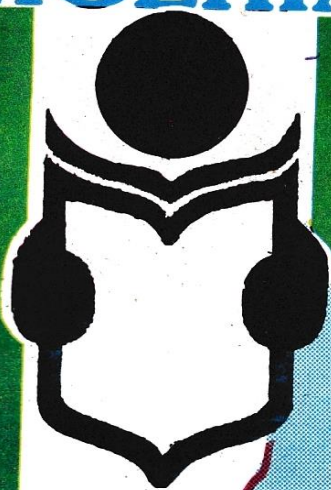


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Radical Strategies For Emancipatory Literacy And Their Implications For The Curriculum Process

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Abstract

All round literacy is intrinsically emancipatory. It liberates the human mind from ignorance, superstition and domination and generates increased skills, greater freedom, improved creativity and better self - management leading to increased responsibility, material well - being and self-actualisation. Emancipatory literacy can no longer rely on the conventionally narrow scope, limited strategies and ad-hoc approaches. Newer and more radical strategies cutting across all levels of curriculum and programme designs, planning and implementation and literacy experiences must be used. The age-old approaches must be seriously questioned in the light of modern scientific and technological innovations. Literacy itself must be redefined to reflect more universal and emancipatory processes and practices. Relevant agenda for emancipatory literacy include re-orientation in teacher education programme, media design and production strategies, government policies and public responses.

Introduction

An all round literacy is intrinsically emancipatory. It liberates the human mind from ignorance, superstition, domination, poverty and diseases. Emancipatory literacy generates increased skills, greater freedom, improved creativity and better self-management leading to increased social responsibility, material well-being, self-actualisation and sustainable living. This type of literacy can no longer rely on the conventional strategies which are narrow in scope, limited in applicability, ad-hoc in approach and generally obsolete and unreliable. The conventional strategies for literacy programmes have not raised the degree nor the percentage of literacy in Nigeria. Moreover it has only focused according to Inyang-Abia (1993) on print literacy to the complete exclusion of all other forms of literacy such as visual literacy, computer literacy, environmental literacy, technological literacy among other which are basically necessary for human emancipation.

Although the conventional strategies focus on the print literacy. Available data confirm that by 1994 the population of non-literate Nigerians stands at 46,269,260 (FRN; ,199). Given Nigeria's population of 88.5 million (1991 census) where about 50.2% of Nigerians are within the working adult age bracket of between 25 and 65 years Federal Ministry of Health and the implication is that about 60% of Nigeria's aged 15 and above (see table one) cannot read and write, let alone have other forms of literacy in spite of the over-orchestrated basic and functional literacy campaigns. This implies that the conventional literacy programmes have failed us. Ridiculous strategies must come to our rescue.

Table 1 POPULATION OF NON- LITERATE NIGERIANS AGED 15+

Year	Non-literate aged 15+
1990	40, 791, 884
1991	42, 097, 224
1992	43, 444, 336
1993	44, 834, 555
1994	46, 269, 260
1995	47, 749, 877
1996	49, 277, 873
1997	50, 854, 765
1998	52, 483, 117
1999	54, 161, 545
2000	55, 894, 714

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1990.15)

Based on the context above, this presentation is designed to :

- establish the rationale and characteristics of emancipatory literacy
- justify the need for the radical strategies
- recommend culturally relevant radical strategies for emancipatory literacy

The Rationale For And Characteristics Of Emancipatory Literacy

Emancipatory literacy is a form of education that sets one free from a wide variety of restraints, disabilities and bondage. It involves the life - long processes of creating awareness and awakening latent talents and capabilities in an individual in such a way that personal progress and self-actualisation are assured. Emancipatory literacy is designed to develop a wide spectrum of skill related to social, economic spiritual, technological well-being so that people fit well into their society. Such goodness of fit implies functional existence and relevance within a given society. Another reason for emancipatory literacy is to eliminate ignorance, superstition, poverty, hunger and diseases. This can therefore improve life and living conditions of the family and the community.

Emancipatory literacy can also lead to sustainable living where people exploit and utilise the natural resources in such a way that future generations will also have the opportunity of benefiting from such resources. Consequently, emancipatory literacy increases the equality of opportunities presently and in future.

The truly emancipatory literacy programme according to Ouane (1989) should be characterised by many features among which the following are important:

- Cultural orientation:** The content of such a programme must be culturally relevant. Local example and non-examples are usually more meaningful to the learner.
- Continuum of a total life - long process:** It must feature continuously in the human life activities. The element of continuity and integration must feature well.
- Increasing degree of Independence:** Self-reliance is a basic principle underlying emancipatory literacy. Consequently, relevant encoding and decoding skills must be properly mastered.
- Democracy:** Emancipating literacy emphasises democratic principles where the learner is an active participant through implementation to evaluation of the programme.
- Integration:** Social, vocational, family and political life of the learner must adequately integrate the learnt literacy skills.
- Flexibility:** Emancipatory literacy must be flexible enough to meet a wide range of challenges. It must be both locally sound, culturally relevant and internationally acceptable. It must also accept alternative approaches to reflect the learner individual differences.
- Special needs:** It also considers specific target with special needs. The special learners, women, youths, the minorities or the paupers have special needs which must be adequately addressed.

Emancipatory literacy, from the above considerations, can therefore be affected by the individual learner concerned, the operative curriculum, the learning environment, available resources, available interactions and teacher ability.

Radical Strategies

Education generally and literacy in particular, according to Pepper (1987:65), is "currently more a means of maintaining the political and economic status quo than anything else" rather than playing the major role in achieving radical social, economic, and cultural changes. That emphasises the need to develop and utilise culturally relevant radical strategies for emancipatory literacy.

Strategies involve the science and art of maximum manoeuvring of people, events, materials, space, time-funds, ideas, among others, to achieve pre-specified goals

and objectives. When such strategies attend to the root cause of human problems and are rather unconventional they can be termed "radical". Among such problems, ignorance seems to rank among the highest. It gives rise to poverty, superstition, hunger, social strife and inequality, among other. The cure for ignorance starts when awareness is adequately created through the educative processes.

Effective development and functional adoption of radical strategies for emancipatory literacy depends and upon are affected by many factors including level of administrative and political support, political stability, the learning environment, teacher capacity and commitment, teacher and learner motivational level, among others. These factors are inter related and must be considered in line with systems thinking where the components are functionally interdependent and synergically co-ordinated.

Among some radical strategies for emancipatory literacy the following deserve serious attention.

(a) Culturally relevant radical functional curriculum

For the curriculum to be culturally relevant and functional it must address the human problems. It must find low-cost solutions to such problems and must reflect the social, economic, political and cultural needs of the people. The problem of ignorance, superstition and poverty must be properly addressed as related to the people in question. Emphasis of such a curriculum must be on skills development to attack the basic problem of ignorance and superstition. Capacity building and utilisation must sharpen its focus on areas that have both immediate and long-term use for the people.

(b) Teacher recruitment by portfolio:

The current trend of over dependence on certification to near complete exclusion of commitment and function can be detrimental to emancipatory literacy. The current recruitment strategy must therefore be reviewed to incorporate evidence of capacity such as ability to design and produce functional and relevant instructional materials substantiated by the actual. Ability to effectively utilise the text-books, audiovisuals and other instructional gadgets and materials and evidence of commitment in terms of previous achievements in related areas should attract higher scores during teacher recruitment interviews.

(c) Periodic credentials renewal:

It is high time teaching credentials be periodically reviewed. This is necessary because of the wide-spread decadence among the available professionals.

Five-to-ten-yearly credential renewal could keep the professionals abreast of developments in their areas of specialisation and keep up their professional commitment, given adequate conditions of service.

(d) Federal government funding. 3-15 years:

Children aged between three and fifteen years should mandatorily remain in school according to their capabilities. Early childhood education is absolutely essential for the development of literacy of various forms. It should be fully funded by the federal government. So also should the primary and junior secondary school level be completely removed from the concurrent list. These measures should be designed to maximise the percentage of Nigerian youths that remain in school up to age fifteen, reduce primary-secondary attrition rate and promote emancipatory literacy. All that it takes for the federal government to do this is absolute commitment to the future of Nigerians. This political will can then provide the necessary stimulus.

(e) Emphasise sustainable practices:

Emancipatory literacy must necessarily emphasise sustainable practices. That means there must be in-built mechanism whereby sustainability principles be taught and practicalized. Maintenance culture, environmental protection and conservation, environmental education, poverty reduction strategies, waste management among other such contents must be adequately emphasised as related to the culture involved and some expected occupational needs. This must be emphasised both in the teacher pre-service and in-service training programmes as well as in the various literacy programmes.

(f) Radical instructional strategies:

Emancipatory literacy is a radical philosophy. It requires radical strategies to cut across all aspects of the teaching-learning process. It requires radical methods and functional materials which are fundamentally problem-solving. Ten of such strategies are provided below:

- I. **Audio-visual methods:** These incorporate electronic, the modified electronic and the non-electronic categories. They can also involve the broadcast and the non-broadcast modes. As silent evangelist this strategy can be useful both within and outside the classroom.
- II. **Discussion:** Various forms of discussion can be adopted for emancipatory literacy if they focus on relevant problems of the non-literates and post-literacy activities. The round table, panel debate and brain storming as discussion methods can be very beneficial

- III. **Entereducate:** This generic method of active learner participation involves seduction through entertainment. As a popular, persuasive and profitable method it can enliven, easily educate and entertain while informing the learners. It is based on the psychology of motivation. Jingles, variety shows, games, poetry, role-playing, monologue, dialogue, cartoons, simulations and miming among others are some usable examples for emancipatory literacy.
- IV. **Exposition:** The lecture, story telling, speeches and illustrated talks, among others can be very helpful particularly at the introductory level of emancipatory literacy activities.
- V. **Inquiry:** The human capacity to find out things independently and discover solutions to facilitate decision making can be fully explored for emancipatory literacy. Guided inquiry, free inquiry and semi-guided inquiry could be very helpful.
- VI. **Peer tutoring:** This strategy sometimes referred to as each-one-teach-one or peer teaching exploits the facilities of similarity in age, social status, interest, ethnicity, work mates among others for emancipatory literacy.
- VII. **Practicals:** Emancipatory literacy is a practical-oriented activity involving systematic process of behavioural changes involving encoding and decoding practices. The actual or practical work must be done and the teacher must assist learners clarify concepts and doubts while encouraging.
- VIII. **Problem-solving.** Closely associated with practicals is problem solving. It involves combining already acquired knowledge and skills to get to the root of a puzzle, get adjusted or clarify a disturbing situation. It is investigative. Through questioning and puzzles in relevant areas emancipatory literacy can be promoted.
- IX. **The project:** This integrated comprehensive process involves the learner or a group of them to naturally perform integrated activities which are true-to-life, take responsibility and put in their initiative. When related to culturally relevant activities they can be very motivating.
- X. **The Futures wheel :** As a consequence-oriented, reflective and innovative technique it involves projecting into the future, examine the possible consequences of illiteracy at the individual, family or immediate community level as also likely to affect the nation and international development.

Summary And Conclusion

Emancipatory literacy is a radical philosophy. It requires radical strategies. It must address the basic problems that challenge human survival. By defeating ignorance, human life can be improved. This can be done only through the awareness creating processes of education which involves a wide spectrum of literacy which frees people from the debilitating clutches of ignorance, poverty, hunger and diseases.

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