



RETHINKING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR LIBERATING LEARNING

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Abstract

In the present age, scarcity of opportunities of employment has led to cut edge competition in pursuit of more academic certificates. So, education loses its true meaning and purpose where learners graduate without requisite desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and competences. It is assumed that the quality and performance of education systems depend more and more on teachers. Hence, the necessity to make improvements in teacher preparation and training is a current issue. For this purpose, we need teacher education reform that aligns teacher preparation with the demands of an increasingly interdependent world in the 21st Century. Therefore, this paper asserts for the integrated use of all of higher education resources in the education and preparation of the whole student. It calls for a radical transformation in teacher education to bring forth learning that liberates. So it advocates for transformative liberal education- a holistic process of learning that places the student at the center of the learning experiences.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Liberal Education, Liberating Learning,



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Introduction

Education has been universally recognized as one of the important facets of the life of an individual. It is widely regarded as the key to human development. Education is an important

tool to attain democracy in real spirit. From Dewey's point of view, schools should develop students' ability to think in a rational manner and schools can do this by integrating experiential education with conventional forms of learning. A student should be educated to have a purpose in society and for himself. Scarcity of opportunities of employment has led to cut edge competition in pursuit of more academic certificates. This in turn has led to increased pressure on educational institutions within which the learners compete against each other even as their institutions compete with similar educational institutions. While academic competition is good it runs the risk of emptying the true purpose of education. So, education loses its true meaning and purpose where learners graduate without requisite desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and competences (Kadenyi & Kariuki, 2011). With governments gearing up to prepare their citizens for the knowledge-economy, greater responsibility has been placed on education institutions to meet the challenges brought about by this new landscape. As knowledge societies expand, reform on the teacher education programs is becoming an important issue because teachers are always seen as moderators of a changing society (Tarman,2010). National governments, international organizations and even international non-government organizations (NGOs) assume that the quality and performance of education systems depend more and more on what teachers know and do in the classroom. (Verger, Altinyelken and, koning,2013). Hence, the necessity to make improvements in teacher preparation and training is a current issue and this paper calls for a radical transformation in teacher education to bring forth learning that liberates.

Education for Liberation

According to Nyerere, the primary purpose of education is the liberation of man. To liberate is to set free from impediments that hinder human progress and development. Education should liberate both mind and body; it should produce a human being who is aware of his potential while pointing out life-enhancing relationship with one's neighbors and the environment. There are two imperatives essential to a liberated human being, namely; (i) an awareness of one's humanity, (ii) the power to use circumstances rather than to be used by them. These dual imperatives should enable an educated person to overcome ingrained feelings of superiority or inferiority. A liberated human being in un-free society inevitably begins to work for freedom for others: and he will be turning even the most unfavorable circumstances to good ends (Hinzen & Hundsdorfer, 1979).

Education in the best sense of the word should be a process of bringing oneself in touch with personal potentialities and of opening the way for actualizing those potentialities. In other words, education for liberation should help a young person become successfully the artisan of his/her life (Mattei,1996). To be a master of one's life an educated person requires intelligence rather than luck. Education in this sense is the process that stimulates our intelligence, which increases our capacity for understanding and, therefore, equips us with an ability to decide wisely about our own affairs'. This ability to decide our own affairs is Nyerere's idea of education for self-reliance. Liberation is a condition for possibility of self-reliance. So, to support today's learning outcomes, the focus of education must shift from information transfer to identity development (transformation).

Teacher Education for Liberating Learning

The quality of education depends on the quality of teachers. Without maintaining the quality of teachers no innovation can be expected. All nations attempt to impart quality education and today when there is virtual explosion of information, it is highly essential that Teacher Education is of the highest quality and standard. Only enlightened and emancipated teachers lead communities and nations by their efforts towards better and higher quality of life.

As teachers are moral actors whose job is to facilitate the growth and development of other human beings. Students depend on teachers to have their best interests at heart and to make sound educational decisions. Teachers have the moral obligation to do all they can to fulfill these expectations and to do so for all children, not just for some (Goodlad, 1994; Tom, 1997). Education for liberation should lead to development and progress in the society for each and all members of the society. Education for liberation should free learners from fallacious illusions and lead them to a state of intellectual and moral enlightenment. This would make one begin the journey to self-reliance away from dependence on shadows of life. Education should liberate learners from restrictive mental habits, attitudes and conventions that imprison human potential for growth and development. So, this realization of liberating learning calls for a radical transformation in the spirit and shape of teacher education as this meta profession has strength and responsibility to transcend the mundane goals and aims of education.

Preparation of Teachers for Liberating learning

All the evidence from different education systems around the world shows that the most important factor in determining how well children do is the quality of teachers and teaching.

Therefore teachers must have a clear vision of their own roles as teachers and of the goals of education for liberating learning (Fullan, 1999). For this purpose, we need teacher education reform that aligns teacher preparation with the demands of an emerging information society and an increasingly interdependent world in the 21st Century. Reform is not a single entity it involves the formation and implementation in toto. The moot question is from where we may start. The following assertions may be taken into consideration:

➤ **Engage Policymakers and Faculty, and Develop a Plan**

Conversations with senior administrators, deans of education, teacher educators can suggest an emerging framework for comprehensive liberating learning of teacher preparation. They can provide access to resources and create a climate that supports the preparation of teachers who can make education liberating and should produce a human being who is aware of his potential.

➤ **Create a liberating learning Oriented General Education Program at graduation level**

Preparing those who will educate the next generation about the world is a vital task but that must be shared by all who instruct future teachers. There is obviously a special role for Education faculty in the process, but faculty in the Arts and Sciences are also essential to developing the liberate knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher candidates. So, this step should be taken at graduation level. Such step ensures that students who decide to pursue a teaching credential later in their undergraduate education, or after having completed an undergraduate degree in another field, will come to their professional education courses with ability to shift the focus of education from information transfer to identity development (transformation).

➤ **Inclusion of relevant subjects**

The goal of education is the liberation of man. Education should liberate both mind and body; it should produce a human being who is aware of his potential while pointing out life-enhancing relationship with one's neighbors and the environment. So, education which develop the competence of learning and unlearning and reach the learner beyond cognition and activate the higher intelligence for liberation that can be taught through existing school subjects as well as subjects called Peace education, intercultural education, environmental education, development education etc. With regard to this purpose the new framework may emphasize the need to: re-conceptualize citizenship training in terms of human rights and approaches of critical pedagogy, emphasize environment and its protection, living in harmony, promote peace, a

democratic way of life, create respect for the constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty, etc.

➤ **Develop Commitment and Skills to make Students Agents of Change**

Teacher Educators should develop in the prospective teachers the commitment and skills to act as agents of change. They must go beyond promoting awareness of the ways schools perpetuate social inequities and help prospective teachers to see that it is possible to reconstruct education to give all students opportunities to learn in academically rigorous ways. They can teach them about the change process, the obstacles to change, helping them develop skills for collaboration and dealing with conflict, and providing evidence that schools can become more equitable. Prospective teachers may also develop the dispositions of change agents. Teacher educators can cultivate those dispositions by emphasizing the moral dimension of education, guiding prospective teachers in developing their own personal vision of education and teaching, promoting the development of empathy for students of diverse backgrounds, nurturing their passion and idealism for making a difference in students' lives, and promoting activism outside as well as inside the classroom.

➤ **Promoting Constructivist Views of Learning**

The knowledge, which children bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning. So, to support students' construction of knowledge, teachers must teach to prospective teachers how to help learners build bridges between what they already know and the new ideas and experiences to which they are exposed. This involves engaging students in questioning, interpreting, and analyzing information in the context of problems or issues that are interesting and meaningful to them. Teachers need to continuously adjust their plans of action to meet students' needs while simultaneously building on their strengths. Unless they experience the knowledge construction process as learners, they are not likely to adopt constructivist views of education or use constructivist strategies in their own teaching.

➤ **Learning about Students**

A teacher must know not only the subject matter he teaches but also his students. To engage students in the construction of knowledge, teachers need to know about students' experiences outside school. Teachers also need insight into how their students' past learning experiences have shaped their current views of school and school knowledge. Such insight enables teachers

to draw on those experiences to represent school knowledge to their students meaningfully and embed learning activities in contexts that are familiar to them. As it is impossible for prospective teachers to learn enough about their future students while in programs of pre service preparation. Such programs, however, should help prospective teachers develop facility with various strategies for learning about students that they can later use in the specific settings in which they teach. These strategies include conducting home visits and consulting with people who live in the communities.

➤ **Initial Time Increase**

It is rightly said that without spending time with learner the prospective teacher cannot know about his learners. So, there is a need to reform the initial teacher training, to increase the proportion of time which trainees spend in the real classroom, focusing on core teaching skills, especially in teaching early reading and concerned subjects and the management of poor behavior in the classroom.

➤ **Development of national network**

There is a need to develop a national network of teaching training schools on the model of teaching hospitals. Only outstanding schools should be selected to giving the role of leading the training and professional development of teachers and head teachers, so that there can be an increase in the number of national and local leaders of education. So, these schools will expect to identify and develop teachers with the potential to take on headship.

➤ **Oppose the elements that are dictating forces in education**

Education is misused and at times tries to adjust by governments, authorities, ideological pressure groups, religious or sectarian clans, corporate business houses and even degree dispatching profiteers. They try to shape learning in such a form that fulfills their secret motives. As the teacher is the agent of change so for this purpose also teachers need to turn into shakers of change. Teachers should be free to focus on doing what is right for the children and young people in their care and not for the duties of un-academic nature. .

➤ **Curriculum, assessment and qualifications**

Raising the status of teachers and giving them renewed freedom and authority will make a significant contribution to improving schools. The system of curriculum, assessment and qualifications should give us the ability to do that, but at present the National Curriculum includes too much that is not essential knowledge, and there is too much prescription about how

to teach. We need a new approach to the National Curriculum, specifying a tighter, more rigorous, model of the knowledge which every child should expect to master in core subjects at every key stage. Review the National Curriculum, with the aim of reducing prescription and allowing schools to decide how to teach, while refocusing on the core subject knowledge that every child and young person should gain at each stage of their education. The proper assessment of pupils at each vital transitional stage of their education provides information to parents about how well their child has done and about the effectiveness of schools, and objective evidence for teachers. Finally, it is essential that the processing of all assessment data not be completed in isolation. Student affairs and academic affairs educators must work in teams to evaluate and understand the actual outcomes. These data provide invaluable information not only on what students are learning but also on how programs, classroom instruction, activities, and services should be improved.

Conclusion

It may not be out of place to point out that rapid process of change plays a fundamental role in society's improvement. In order to educate more qualified generations, education process must be organized and improved so as to meet the needs of today and tomorrow (Erten, 2006). Many issues, trends, and concerns will shape and influence the work of student affairs in the future. So learning must be reconsidered – that new research, changing times, and the needs of today's emerging generations of students require that our traditionally distinct categories of academic learning and student development be fused in an integrated, comprehensive vision of learning as a transformative process that is centered in and responsive to the whole student. Therefore, every resource on every teacher education institute should be used to achieve transformative liberal education for all students, and all colleges and universities are accountable for establishing and assessing specific student outcomes that reflect this integrated view of learning. Colleges and universities of every type should commit to the intentional review and strengthening of every institutional structure and resource that can support transformative liberating learning. All institutions may establish routine ways to hear students' voices, consult with them, explore their opinions, and document the nature and quality of their experience as learners. Senior academic administrators and faculty can equally acknowledge, support, and integrate the powerful opportunities for transformative liberating learning found across the entire college environment. Senior administrators in partnership with the senior of each institution may

review current administrative and organizational structures to determine whether they support the accomplishment of desired student outcomes, and can consider restructuring when necessary to support a strong emphasis on the education of the whole student.

Faculty members and academic advisors in all settings can establish plans to create resources that help students find clear and flexible pathways to the learning outcomes they seek to develop. All campus educators may commit to identifying and integrating community-based learning experiences so students can create a holistic experience by learning from their total environment. Administrators and members of the faculty in teacher training programs preparing students for work in student affairs must ensure that their curricula will prepare forward-thinking, confident, and competent educators who will work effectively with other institutional agents to make colleges and universities learning communities in which students develop the knowledge and skills they need for today's rapidly changing world. Each teacher training institution may provide such professional development programs that address the changing nature of the student experience and student learning so that all educators can continuously assess and improve their efforts in enhancing the learning process. So a comprehensive teacher preparation framework for liberating learning may include reexamination of teacher preparation programs that can produce such teachers who have the knowledge, skills, dispositions and a commitment to assisting students to become responsible citizens both of the world and of their own communities.

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