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**Surname:** OMIDIRE

**First Name:** Margaret Funke

**E-mail:** [mfomidire@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mfomidire@yahoo.co.uk)

**Telephone:** +234 803 546 9111

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The relationship between distance teacher education, additional language and assessment**

A study was recently conducted to determine the influence of a Curriculum-based Dynamic Assessment (CDA) procedure on the performance and affect of additional language (AL) learners in mainstream education. Eight learners in Grade 8 selected from two schools in Lagos, Nigeria, participated in a process of debriefing and mediation during three continuous assessment cycles and the end-of-term examination in two subjects, Business Studies and Integrated Science. The study was an attempt to employ CDA as a means of reducing the inequity in the assessment of learners using a language in which they lack proficiency.

Although the results suggest a generally positive influence of CDA, to varying degrees, on participants' performance and affect, the participants' low level of AL acquisition in Grade 8 brings to question the actual language teaching and learning process itself. The low level of AL (English) ability was almost crippling to the whole study, hence code switching had to be used extensively during mediation and debriefing.

As with the power of the language factor in the community, the severity of the barriers in the teaching/learning situation under study constituted a serious limitation to optimum learning and in some cases appeared to make other considerations even seem irrelevant. The challenges ranged from an outright non-conducive physical environment brought about by a serious breakdown of basic infrastructure, to inadequate teaching techniques. The results suggest that the teaching process could be fundamentally flawed as it appeared that some of the teachers, as models of language, were themselves failing the learners. It became evident during the course of this study that the impact of teaching and learning styles and other conditions on learners' progress were very prominent and sometimes almost overwhelming.

The question of the adequacy of teacher training and continuous professional development was deemed a strong factor in both the participating schools. Open distance education for teacher training and in-service training appears to be a viable option, since we cannot hope to improve the quality of education without first and foremost impacting teacher education. The results of this study indicate a profound need to expand teacher education to increase the number of truly qualified teachers and make teacher education available to all. Research is however necessary to identify methods of reaching teachers in the rural parts of Africa where basic infrastructure is inadequate or completely unavailable.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The issues relating to teacher education, its methods and effectiveness are of utmost importance and cannot be ignored. The implications of teacher education have long term effects and become relevant in the most unexpected situations. The study discussed below focused on additional language (AL) and assessment but the close correlation to teacher education became evident during the data collection. This paper intends to discuss the results of the study as it relates to language, and how language teaching methods and practices might have affected the learning and assessment of the participants and thereby the outcome of the study. The paper will also discuss distance teacher education and continued professional development as a probable variable for improving learning outcome on language acquisition and use.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The additional language (AL) factor in education is a global phenomenon. Immigration is on the increase and with it, cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD) in classrooms. In addition, many learners in developing and post colonial African countries have to use an AL as the language of learning, teaching and assessment (LoLTA). This is either due to the multiplicity of the languages represented in such countries or because their official languages are foreign languages. The situation thereby creates a new generation of AL learners worldwide who are now said to outnumber L1 learners (Nieman, 2006:22-26). Educators are sometimes unaware of the complexities of L2 and AL acquisition, and classroom practices often end up labelling AL learners as having learning disabilities, underachieving or emotionally unstable, leading to classification into one form of special educational needs programme or another.

There are other challenges associated with learning in an AL, and one of them is learners being assessed in a language in which they lack proficiency, in a static manner which does not accommodate the language barriers that are often associated with L2 and AL acquisition. These AL learners lack proficiency at both the receptive and expressive level, and often can hardly comprehend or communicate, let alone be assessed, in the LoLTA without questions of validity and equity in assessment being raised. The continued use of such static assessment practices can have lasting effects on the learners and their attitude, especially when they are

high stakes assessments that are used for classification and/or for selection and progression.

## **THE STUDY**

Other forms of alternative assessment and accommodations in assessment have been investigated and have not been fully able to cater for the challenges of AL learners. The study was therefore to investigate the influence of dynamic assessment (DA) as an alternative method of assessment for learners whose home language is different from the language of learning teaching and assessment (LoLTA). The study built on the curriculum-based dynamic assessment (CDA) developed by C.S. Lidz (2002:73) out of the need to “bridge assessment with intervention and for the results of the assessment to inform instruction”. The purpose was to find out how additional language (AL) learners respond to this method of assessment and determine the correspondent influence that the CDA procedure has on learning, performance and affect of AL learners.

## **METHOD**

A qualitative multiple case study was conducted with eight AL participants, purposively selected from two Grade 8 classes each in two government schools, one from the lower-income bracket (LIB-School) and the other from the middle-income bracket (MIB-School). The study ran for the first school term through three continuous assessment (CA) cycles and the end-of-term examination. The participants were coded: AF, AM, BF and BM (LIB School) and CF, CM, DF and DM (MIB School).

The instrumentation consisted of CA1-assessment tasks in Business Studies (BS) and Integrated Science (IS) as initially developed by the teachers, and mediational assessment tasks for the further rounds of assessment. Per CA-cycle, the CDA-procedure took the form of linguistically focused debriefing and mediation regarding assessment questions. Debriefing involved discussing with participants their observed behaviour and experience of the assessment, seeking to identify the language-related challenges of the assessment tasks and engaging them in a solution-finding exercise to address the linguistic barriers encountered. Mediation addressed the processing of questions (Omidire, 2009).

Findings derived from the debriefing and mediation were categorised into receptive and expressive language barriers. Mediation then entailed the linguistic adaptation of assessment questions set by the teachers to mediate cognitive-linguistic acts of response at both levels and scaffolding in the form of a glossary was developed. The glossary contained subject-specific and functional assessment terms from the questions, e.g. *agent*, *differentiate*, *describe*. The strategies aimed essentially to enable the AL participants to self-direct their language-related acts to process the questions and construct their responses more effectively (Omidire, 2009).

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **(a) Use of DA**

The mediational process focused largely on the participants' access to the assessment questions by mediating more in terms of language than content (Losardo & Notari-Syverson, 2001: 126). Particularly with the LIB School, mediation by and large took the form of reading support. Decoding and comprehension of the assessment materials became the focus of most sessions, when, due to the extent of the AL barrier, graduated prompting (Campione & Brown, 1987:105-106) in respect of conceptual processing was rendered somewhat ineffective some cases. The severity of the AL challenges (especially with participants AF, AM, BF, BM, CF) often meant that processing the subject content itself was secondary to coping with basic communication in the LoLTA.

The needs in the MIB School were slightly different in that three of the four participants could at least read and understand generally what the questions required of them. So, support of metacognition to ensure focused comprehension of the questions and direction for the processing to arrive at appropriate responses here became features of the DA mediation. The findings from the debriefing and mediation shed valuable light on the nature of the challenges in assessment that each participant had individually.

DA appears overall to have had a positive influence on the assessment process for the participants: directly, by aiding the reading and comprehension of questions, and guiding appropriate oral responses; and indirectly, by mediating comprehension of the questions during actual assessment by presenting linguistically modified questions and providing the glossary and spelling list. The use of the glossary seemed especially to empower the participants to exercise a degree of self-regulation in respect of comprehension of the assessment questions, suggesting that even indirect, non-individualised mediation in DA could have a positive influence in the assessment of AL learners generally.

The study concluded that DA appears to have had a positive influence on the participants' performance in assessment, although to various degrees, and that contextual factors as well as individual learning potential played an important part in the variance. The results are an indication that latent learning potential possibly impacted the participants' capacity to respond positively to the DA used. Once the nature of the participants' AL challenges was identified and scaffolding provided, individually appropriate DA measures seemed to enable the participants' true ability to manifest in different degrees, for them to perform closer to their full potential even in the face of the AL factor. However, they seemed to require mediation sustained over a longer period, which would hopefully have resulted in even better achievement.

#### **(b) The additional language situation**

The socio-economic and affective contexts within each of the schools were major factors that contributed to the findings, but none more so than the overall context of language. The findings from this study suggest that the challenges concerning AL proficiency experienced by the participants formed the unique linguistic context within which each of these learners resided both cognitively and affectively. The factors contributing to the linguistic context included the language of the community and immediate out-of-school environment including family/parental influence, the processes of teaching and learning, the participants' individual challenges in learning and the influence of the school as context. All of these contributed strongly to my synthesis towards an understanding of the AL context of the study.

### ***(i) Language in the Community***

The LIB School was located within a community that was comprised largely of lower income earners consisting mostly of petty traders, farmers and artisans, although there was now a gradual influx into the area of relatively higher income earners, including some professionals. The community within which the MIB School was located was mixed, comprising people from different backgrounds. Inhabitants of both communities used Yoruba, English or Pidgin to communicate with each other.

The participants' oral and written responses displayed a high level of interference of their L1 (Yoruba) at least in the linguistic, sociolinguistic, cognitive and affective dimensions. Their pronunciation was laced with Yoruba accent and their spellings were faulty, often based on writing words as pronounced. Whole sentences were sometimes translated directly from Yoruba, thereby blurring the clarity of the meaning and making it especially challenging for someone who does not belong to the community. The interference of the L1 with pronunciation appeared to be a general phenomenon with all the participants. In Yoruba, words are written phonetically, i.e. according to the pronunciation of the component sounds on the alphabet table and this means there are no unpronounced letters or irregular spellings as in English. So, some spelling errors of some participants (AM, BM) are actually phonetic spellings and thus become understandable, e.g. "loamy" as "lomin" and "heart" as "hart".

Grammatical 'errors' made by learners in the AL sometimes carry psycho- and sociolinguistic overtones. For instance, in Yoruba singular nouns and proper nouns, (e.g. mom, dad, Mrs X) quite often take the plural form of the pronoun in spoken communication, depending on the relationship between the parties. Ordinarily in Yoruba, one cannot refer to someone older or in a position of authority using a singular pronoun, as is the English language, because the plural form signifies respect in Yoruba. So, when referring to the teacher as "they", CF in the example below was obeying the rules of Yoruba which obviously is wrong in English:

Researcher: Ma a worry, ko kin se pe nma so fun teacher yin. Mi o ni so.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Don't worry, it is not as if I'm going to tell your teacher. I won't tell.*

CF: No, Ma. If they (teacher) catch you, they will beat you very well (Omidire, 2009).

The tenses also create confusion for those who are not proficient in the two languages. In Yoruba, actions that occurred in the past are described using the present tense and there is also no declension for verb-noun correspondence, it is denoted by adverbs of time and by the subject, and not by actually changing the verb form. So, often a direct translation from Yoruba to English results in grammatical errors. Below are examples where CF was referring to incidents that occurred in the past using utterances that were direct translations from Yoruba.

(a) CF: We do the correction in class. We stand up and answer the questions. (We did the correction in class. We stood up and answered the questions.)

(b) CF: I check for words on the paper. (I checked for the words on the paper.)

(c) CF: Yes, Ma. I check the words. It make it better. I can answer. (I checked the words. It made it better. I could answer.) (Omidire, 2009)

For the numerous differences between the two languages, ranging from phonology to syntax and orthography, learners require some measure of cognitive modifiability to accommodate the variations as they move from the use of their L1 used in their community, to the AL used in their lessons. The participants in this study did not appear to have much exposure to reading in either language and to them, it appeared, there was no fine line between the two.

Many learners in the communities to which the participants belonged have parents who are not competent users of English even at the level of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (Cummins, 2000:111-115; Cummins & Swain, 1986:152-153). They get by using Yoruba and Pidgin. Such learners (e.g. AF and AM) can be described as being linguistically hemmed-in because they are surrounded by people who do not speak the language they need to acquire to make progress at school. Hence, their only exposure to English, the LoLTA, is during their lessons in school. Even peer interaction in the schools, from the findings, seemed to

take place in Yoruba and conversational communication in Yoruba, which was mainly at the level of BICS, was different to their required academic communication in English at the level of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in respect of content, linguistic complexity and lexicon (Cummins, 2000:111-115; Cummins & Swain, 1986:152-153).

The importance of the immediate environment in the home and community can hardly be over-estimated. Krashen's distinction (in Nieman, 2006: 26 & 27) between language acquisition and language learning suggests that language acquisition, *inter alia*, takes place through social interaction in specific contexts. It is an informal learning experience that largely happens unconsciously and therefore depends on the level of language usage being modelled for its quality and outcomes. By contrast, language learning, frequently of the AL or LoLTA, takes place in a formal teaching situation where rules governing grammar, word formation and their application are taught and the content and lexicon being presented are selective, as are also the goals and hidden curriculum. Krashen regards language learning as less effective than language acquisition, a dire conclusion for learners who need to achieve the level of CALP in the AL exclusively by means of exposure at school. However, Nieman (2006: 26) maintains that it is possible effectively to support the development of full discourse skills and concepts required for CALP by means of language teaching.

In discussing the language proficiency of the participants and the results of this study, the choice and use of language within the immediate environment cannot be ignored. In Nigeria, English may have been placed in a position of prominence because, as suggested by Opara (2004:29), it appears to be a unifying element in a highly complex multilingual society where it is estimated that about four hundred indigenous languages are spoken (Bamgbose, 1995: 24).

Though English is the official language of the country and by implication of the communities within which the study took place, local variations of English containing alterations to the grammatical structure are also in use, and press against the boundaries of the proper use of English grammar as well as pronunciation. This

tendency, coupled with the everyday use of Pidgin, forms a formidable challenge for any individual, particularly AL learners who have to attain English proficiency at CALP level as well as assimilate complex subject terminology. In Nigeria, there is now a very thin line between the correct use of English and the accepted use of English based on interference of the local languages. Knowing where one ends and the other commences could be challenging. The link between some of the participants' errors in spelling and the local variation of the pronunciation of the words needs further investigation, as also the use of Pidgin within the community as a confounding factor in AL learning.

The findings revealed that the language situation within the communities of both schools possibly constituted a limitation for the participants. This corroborates Vygotsky's suggestion that the physical and social contexts within which learning takes place remain an integral part of what is learned (Haywood and Brown, 1990:414; Kozulin & Garb, 2002:113; Minick, 1987:118; Wood, 1998: 40), and that the concept of human development places interaction between children and more mature members of their culture at the heart of psychological growth. Where cultural tools such as language and speech that facilitate social construction and intellectual development are not distinct and focused, the challenges become more complicated. Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of the social environment and the social construction of the mind as a means of intellectual development (Blanck, 1990: 50; Deutsch and Reynolds, 2000:312; Minick, 1987:121-126) seem to be borne out by the influences that the contexts of the LIB and MIB Schools had on the distinction between the results of their teaching and learning.

### ***(ii) (Processes of teaching and learning)***

The impact of teaching and learning conditions on learners' progress cannot be under-estimated and, as became apparent during the course of this study, barriers may sometimes be almost overwhelming. As with the power of the language factor of the community, the severity of the barriers in the teaching/learning situation under study constituted a serious limitation to optimum learning and in some cases appeared to make other considerations even seem irrelevant. The challenges ranged from an outright non-conducive physical environment brought about by a

serious breakdown of basic infrastructure, to inadequate teaching techniques and poor language models to learn from. In the LIB School, the lack of basic amenities appeared to make both teaching and learning very challenging.

What the MIB School gained in terms of provision of basic infrastructure, it lost in the hugely overcrowded classrooms averaging more than a hundred learners per class. The whole context seemed to be pitched against teaching and learning from the outset. The situation was compounded by the AL factor and the learners having underdeveloped language proficiency in the LoLTA and often even in their L1. It is noteworthy how in the MIB School even learners with above average performance (DF and DM) had failed to comfortably attain language proficiency in English at CALP level. Contributing factors were possibly that the school community endorsed a practice virtually of language immersion, in that they discouraged the use of Yoruba both in and out of the classroom. The larger society seemed to “glorify” the use of English with little regard for the version and standard of the language being learned. Unfortunately exposure to the correct form of English is rare in some communities.

The LIB School participants required considerable code switching to be certain that they had a good understanding of what the project was about and in particular for the debriefing and mediation procedures. This was despite the fact that the responses anticipated in the assessment tasks did not require the formation of lengthy or complicated sentences or advanced grammar. In the MIB School, code switching was less necessary but could not be ruled out either (with CF).

Code switching functions on two levels, the receptive and the expressive. At the receptive level it aids comprehension and means that the teacher can act as mediator of understanding and at the expressive level it helps one to convey one’s knowledge and understanding (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004: 75; Nieman, 2006: 32). In the study, the implication of code switching where practised, by LIB, the science teacher in the LIB School, was that the learners were able to achieve some measure of comprehension of the lesson content. Subsequently having to prepare for an assessment from English notes and textbooks without the help of code

switching and independently having to make sense of assessment questions in English, again without the help of code switching, was a grim reminder of the fact that the AL as the LoLTA certainly does not go away. Moreover, achieving some understanding did not ensure any communicative competence at the expressive level. English was still the medium of expression of whatever had been learned. Code switching to convey understanding was not permitted – instead, learners frequently were stringently penalised for the slightest of errors.

Though the teachers' code switching seemed to aid learners comprehension at the receptive level and the knowledge was then seemingly acquired; a major hurdle remained in having to prepare for assessments purely through the medium of the AL and then having to either depend on recall of information learned by rote, or translate all knowledge back to the AL when expressing themselves. Code switching certainly did not serve the needs of these AL learners at the expressive level. Unfortunately the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) does not address the use of code switching in teaching and learning so there seems to be no guidance on the subject.

The AL challenge is further compounded by the level of complexity and linguistic demand of some subjects over others. IS was deemed more difficult than BS by most participants (AF, AM, BF, BM, DF and DM) apparently due to poor knowledge of subject terminology. The IS terminology was complex and finding Yoruba words for scientific concepts was daunting – so much so, that AM and BM wanted to drop the subject and speculated as to its pointlessness in their daily existence. BS was obviously less complex for the majority of the participants and easier for the teachers to present.

The AL factor in the teaching and learning made it essentially difficult to ascertain whether errors were due to lack of subject knowledge, language deficiency or learning disability or maybe a combination of all three. This substantiates the suggestion that teachers in multilingual and multicultural classrooms face the task of distinguishing between language-related achievement issues and other obstructive factors, such as genuine learning disabilities (Camilleri & Law, 2007: 313; Frost, 2000: 133; Lidz & Macrine, 2001: 77; Pena & Gilman, 2000: 543 & 547). The findings

suggest that having resources to make this distinction is crucial. There appeared to be no special education consultants or co-ordinators and educational psychologists leaving a gap in the system.

### **(c) Participants' challenges in learning**

The findings suggest particular areas in which the participants experienced the greatest difficulties. For instance, the learners in the LIB School seemed to have greater challenges than those in the MIB School with all aspects of reading and this necessarily impacted their learning overall. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005: 144) found, in a study carried out with Grade 8 learners in a township school in South Africa, that a lack of basic reading skills indeed had direct implications for the learners' academic performances. Some of the challenges the LIB participants faced included vocalising as well as following the words with their fingers when reading (AF and AM). This style of reading should long have been outgrown by learners in Basic 8, and at this stage could indicate an extreme degree of reading difficulty at the decoding level, and consequently risk of losing track of the textual content due to overload of the short-term memory. AF and AM were the weakest readers among the participants. BF struggled with recognition of key words and BM's reading, though slightly more fluent than the others', still required a lot of practice as well.

The participants' reading comprehension was also far from adequate, questions had to be translated, terminology explained before they showed signs of understanding and in some instances (e.g. AF), even that was not sufficient to ensure full comprehension. By contrast, the MIB School participants, excepting CF, were able to read relatively well. CF repeated words and phrases, which made the text sound somewhat confusing. CM, in his bid to rush through the reading, often tripped on words and then started over. DF and DM required minimal assistance with their reading although they also required assistance with pronunciation.

In all respects, comprehension was a considerable challenge for some of the learners, corroborating the findings of Barry (2002:113-114), who maintained that the English L2 speakers did not have the level of proficiency required for comprehension, to make inferences and critically evaluate texts used in the study

and had also found it difficult to complete sections where they were required to write their own responses to demonstrate comprehension. The learners in the LIB School required extensive explanation (most times in Yoruba) to grasp the essence of the assessment questions. They demonstrated a lack of comprehension of the conceptual aims of questions.

At the expressive language level, virtually all the learners appeared to have difficulty coping with terminology and subject-specific key concepts, and more so for IS than for BS. This finding is not surprising considering the extent of difficulty generally associated with IS, and suggests that lacking equivalent words for translation into Yoruba increased the level of complexity of the IS terminology from the point of view of the participants. CF and CM were the only two participants whose scores in IS were better than in BS. These two participants (from the same class) appeared to have serious issues with the teaching methodology and attitude of the BS-teacher, resulting in a serious lack of interest in the subject and probably having a direct impact on their motivation and performance.

There was evidence of rote learning on the part of participants from both schools (AM, CF and CM). The findings seem to corroborate those of other studies ((Banda, 2000: 51; Barry, 2002: 106; Howie, 2004: 157; Howie and Hughes 1998: 5,6,75 & 77; Prinsloo, 2005:37) suggesting that, due to the AL factor, the participants saw no other way to cope with the complex terminology than to memorise learning content even without real comprehension. As a result, they found it exceedingly difficult to formulate answers in their own words when questions required them to *explain*, *differentiate* and *describe*. The tendency to learn by rote could be linked to the AL factor and is a critical setback for education in developing countries since it could inhibit learners' ability to think independently and contribute to discussion and debate. Higher order thinking, application of knowledge, synthesis and evaluation become virtually impossible where basic comprehension has not been achieved. The ultimate product of rote learning, especially where AL is a factor, are learners that fail to develop to their full potential, and who simply regurgitate what they have memorised and might not be able to contribute meaningfully to issues that affect them.

The findings further imply that, for the participants, processing their thoughts and ideas seemed challenging in varying degrees. DF and DM appeared able to process their thoughts and ideas better than AM and BF, but for some, like AF, it seemed virtually impossible. All the participants appeared to process their thoughts in Yoruba and then attempt to translate them to English. Hence, they read the questions in English, translated to Yoruba to attempt comprehension, then processed and mentally formulated their answers in Yoruba and then translated their response to English. This process of translation is very delicate, and could compound the problem when the learner's English lexicon is limited. From the findings, translating back and forth appeared directly related to the issue of vocabulary building and to participants' varying lack of adequate vocabulary, ranging from functional assessment terms at the receptive language level, to subject-specific terms which made it impossible for most (AF, AM, BF, BM and CF) to express themselves clearly and achieve clarity in their written work. The findings are supported by the report of Howie and Hughes (1998) on the performance of South African students in the TIMSS project that also identified these crucial language-in-assessment issues and concluded that they probably had a negative impact on achievement. Similarly, Aigbomian (in Ogunleye, 1999:184) also found that learners in Nigeria did not have the required level of academic language to comprehend the Physics concepts to the extent where they would meaningfully apply such concepts. It is certainly not out of place to suggest that the above findings might be related to the methods and processes adopted for language teaching and learning.

### **THE PLACE OF TEACHER TRAINING**

In the course of the study, several questions became apparent that need research. At the fundamental level of theory formation, the influence of the AL, the severity of the linguistic challenges encountered, mean that exploring the background of the classroom teaching of the LoLTA is of primary concern. At the level of application, research is proving essential into AL education practices in the feeder primary schools as well as the level of proficiency carried forward into the secondary school.

The linguistic challenges encountered during the course of the study were almost overwhelming. One of the reasons why the participants were chosen from Grade 8

was to ensure that having spent seven years in full time schooling and learning the AL there would have been some level of competence in the AL. The important questions then become “How was language taught in Grade 7 and during the primary school years? What was the quality of language teaching for these learners? How can teacher training be used to address the challenges in language teaching for better outcomes with a majority of learners in a particular classroom?”

In the course of debriefing, the participants in this study unanimously reiterated what they believed constituted challenges to their learning. It was not surprising that the process of teaching and learning featured prominently. There appeared to be a somewhat desperate suggestion that English, (the AL) as a school subject, should be broken down into focused parts such as grammar, vocabulary, speech/phonetics, comprehension and spelling. The participants further believed that each component should be taught by different language teachers. This suggestion by the participants is an indication that the language teachers might not be doing enough to ensure that the learners reach the CALP level of language proficiency.

The participants all felt that a support system independent of the schools, such as private after-school tutoring or study support, was important for them to make progress. This is further demonstration of the participants’ lack of faith in the capability of the schools (teachers?) to positively impact their achievement. This appeared to be a call, even though it is by a small group, for us to take a closer look at teacher training practices to ensure that language teachers are equipped with the right skills to handle the task of teaching AL learners.

### **THE VALUE OF DISTANCE TEACHER EDUCATION**

Distance teacher education appears to be a feasible tool for addressing the challenges of inadequate language teaching in schools. It is an avenue for the latest language teaching and vocabulary building strategies to be intermittently introduced to teachers for effective teaching and learning to take place. Distance teacher education could also hold promise particularly for continuing professional development and in-service training. In-service-training is an integral part of teacher development within the school system, to ensure that teachers keep abreast of the trends in education and encourage consistent best practices and innovations in

teaching. UNESCO Report on “Teacher Education through Distance Learning” (2001) states that distance education is used to “raise the skills, deepen the understanding and extend the knowledge of teacher” and that the basic initial training for teachers is no longer adequate. The organisation believes that distance education can be a means of re-orientation for teachers.

This study has been an eye-opener to the extent of work that is still required to ensure that all teachers have the basic training. Language pedagogy and actual classroom practices require further investigation. There is a need for teachers to be held accountable and encouraged to seek assistance/support where their teaching methods are not yielding the expected results. With the case of Nigeria, there is probably a need for urgent action to intensify efforts to make continuing professional development available and compulsory for teachers. Research into practical ways to use distance teacher education for profession development and in-service-training in rural areas and places where the basic infrastructure is almost non-existent is essential. How do we make online resources and training available and beneficial to those educators who lack the basic infrastructure/facilities?

## **CONCLUSION**

It is obvious that distance teacher education appears to be the most feasible way for farthest reach in terms of teacher training and development. Innovations are however still required to achieve success in rural areas. In Nigeria there appears to be a need to also consider raising the entry requirements for selection into teaching programmes to match other courses in order to ensure that it is not just the last option for those who want any qualification; but that candidates sincerely have a passion for teaching.

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