TOWARDS AN INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR NIGERIA

Andrew Onwudinjo
Institute of Humanities
Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos State
aonwudinjo@pau.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper argues that an indigenous philosophy of education for Nigeria should be one that is eclectic in nature, inclusive of formal, non-formal and informal modes of education and relevant to the cultural needs of the people. Such a philosophy of education will lead to the development of an individual that can subsequently become functional within the society. By being functional we mean being a responsible citizen who will continually strive for the progress of himself/herself, the progress of others within the society and the progress of the society as a whole. This is achieved when the individual understands his/her role within the society as a part of the whole. The problem of this study is the unfortunate contemporary state of the Nigerian educational system which lacks a practicable basis in a philosophy of education hence the value of education in the development of the society is wanting. Through the methodology of critical analysis, the paper shows that an indigenous philosophy of education, relevant to the cultural and contextual need of the peoples in Nigeria is essential for the progress of the Nigerian society. The value of education in a society can never be underestimated as no society can meaningfully develop without a viable education system. The paper thus submits that an eclectic theoretical perspective through a blend of notable theories of education to suit our multicultural Nigerian context is a way forward. It is believed that this blend of theories tailored towards contextual needs ensures the development of the individual and society.

Keywords: Philosophy, Education, Philosophy of Education, Eclecticism, Indigenous, Theories of Education

Introduction

Education is essential to the wellbeing of any society just as the fate of any society depends on its value on education. Education has to do with transmitting knowledge from one generation to another hence it will not be out of place to say that the continuity, progress and development of a society is anchored on its education. But any form of education

must have a basis which guarantees its sustenance. This is where the philosophy of education comes in.

There is no denying the fact that a building without a solid foundation is more likely to collapse under the force of the wild wind of a heavy storm. After collapsing, the storm then washes away the rubbles. This analogy is synonymous with an educational system that does not have the solid foundation of a philosophy of education. The philosophy of education gives focus to how the peoples of the society will be educated and a focus for the educational system so that the cultural heritage of the society can be transmitted from one generation to another to ensure continuity. The goals, aims, and modes of education are always embedded in this philosophy and it goes a long way in creating an identity and value for the society. Such a philosophy of education must equally be amenable to the realities of the society and of the world at large. This is necessary because no society can exist in isolation hence a philosophy of education must be in tandem with the global nature of contemporary world.

Nigeria is an important country in the continent of Africa and also plays a representative role on the global stage. The different experiences of the peoples that make up the Nigerian society need to be harmonized into a central philosophy hence the need for a philosophy of education that can ensure the transmission of worthy heritages. Nigeria has a checkered history and its education system have not been spared from this problem. Education in the country is today at its lowest ebb because it lacks a lot of basics and its products are not living up to the expectation of citizens. This paper shows that recourse to the foundation in an indigenous philosophy of education is a first step towards revamping the Nigerian society.

To attempt an articulation of a philosophy of education for Nigeria, this paper will be divided into three parts. The first part will focus on a clarification of some basic concepts while the second part will take a look at the current situation of things in the Nigerian education system. The third part proposes an approach to a philosophy of education through eclecticism of theories that will create a foundation and subsequently guarantee the human and nonhuman development of the country.

Conceptual Clarification

In this part the concepts of philosophy, education, philosophy of education and theories of education will be clarified.

Understanding Philosophy

Defining philosophy beyond its etymological meaning of "love for wisdom" has always been difficult because of the several influences upon the person attempting to define philosophy which naturally clouds his definition. Citing C. S. Momoh, Godwin Azenabor "particularly identified five factors which are responsible for the absence of universally accepted definitions of philosophy. The factors are culture, age, schools of thought, area perspective and ambitions based on a programme and agenda."[1] It is noteworthy that the question of what philosophy is, is a fundamental one which alongside questions of the certainty of any knowledge at all are in the view of Bertrand Russell paved with obstacles in the way of finding straightforward and confident answers to. Russell reasoned that this is so because "philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas.[2]" James Christian also reasoned along this line when he points out that "ever since Socrates spent his days in the marketplace engaging the Athenian citizens in thoughtful conversations, the message of philosophy has been that ordinary, everyday thinking is inadequate for solving the important problems of life. If we are serious about finding solutions, then we need to learn to think more carefully, critically, and precisely about the issues of daily life."[3]

But irrespective of the perspectives which could cloud defining philosophy and other inherent obstacles, Azenabor talks about the philosopher's ability to go beyond ordinary thinking in his quest for knowledge. He notes that "a philosopher is a thinker equipped with the intuitive and rational stamina to delve, more than superficially, into the difficult and complex problems of life."[4] To this end "… philosophy is a rational and systematic study of the nature of man and his position and goal in the world… philosophy deals with the question of the ultimate it could be ultimate reality (metaphysics), ultimate truth (epistemology), ultimate value (ethics), and ultimate reason (logic)."[5] Christian also

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[1] Azenabor Godwin. *Understanding the Problems of African Philosophy,* Second Edition, Lagos: First Academic Publishers, 2002, p. 2.

[2] Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 1.

[3] James Christian, *Philosophy: An Introduction to the Art of Wondering*, (California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012), p. xxii.

[4] Azenabor, Godwin. *Understanding the Problems* op. cit., pp. 6-7.

[5] Ibid. p. 7.

writes about the method of philosophy that: It is learning how to ask and reask questions until meaningful answers begin to appear. It is learning how to relate materials. It is learning where to go for the most dependable, up-to-date information that might shed light on some problem. It is learning how to double-check fact-claims in order to verify or falsify them. It is learning how to reject fallacious fact-claims—no matter how prestigious the authority who holds them or how deeply one personally would like to believe them,[6] to this end he says:

> Philosophy is critical thinking about thinking, the proximate goal of which is to get in touch with the truth about reality, the ultimate goal being to better see the Big Picture. It is often said that philosophers engage in two basic tasks: taking apart-analyzing ideas to discover if we truly know what we think we know-and putting together-synthesizing all our knowledge to find if we can attain a larger and better view of life. That is, philosophers try very hard to dig deeper and fly higher in order to solve problems and achieve a modicum of wisdom on the question of life and how to live it.[7]

Such attempt at solving the problem of education necessitated the philosophy of education, but before looking at what philosophy of education is let us attempt an understanding of education.

Education

Education is believed to be an on-going endeavour in the life of an individual which only stops at the point of death. Even a dead body is a source of education to the living. This understanding of education can be deduced from the broad sense of education. According to Kneller, education "has two senses-one broad and the other narrow and technical. In its broad sense, education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual". [8] Still thinking in this broad perspective, Emile Durkheim according to Azenabor defines education "as the influence exercised by the adult generations on those that are yet ready for social life… the main objective of education is to arouse and develop in the individual certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states,

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[6]Christian, Op. cit. p. xxi-xxii.

[7]Ibid. p. xxii.

[8]Azenabor, Godwin. "Sustainability of University Education in Nigeria: A Philosophical Discourse on Problems and Revival Strategies" in *African Studies Monographs,* Serial No. VI, Lagos: Onosomegbowho Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd, 2005, p. 4.

which are demanded of him or her by society as a whole and the specific milieu…"[9] The agents of this broad sense of education which is described as the informal aspect of education include, "social agents such as the home, the family the peer group, the society, mass media, religious bodies and so on".[10] On the other hand in the formal, or technical and narrow sense, "education is the process by which any society, through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions, deliberately transmits its cultural heritage, i.e. its accumulated knowledge, values, skills, from one generations to another".[11] In this line of thought, R. S. Peters in his book Ethics and Education, "described the educating process as the intentional transmission of something worthwhile in a morally acceptable manner… that education must involve knowledge and understanding such that the knowledge is not inert in that it characterizes a person's way of looking at things and he is committed to the positive use of that knowledge"[12] Nwagwu also defines education as the "process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge skills, and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in order to continuously foster the well-being of mankind".[13]

From the definitions of education cited above, we will understand that there is a relationship between education and the state of the society thereby requiring a constant re-examination of the educational system of the society to keep it in tune with the progressive aims of such society. Philosophy is that discipline that uses rational, critical and analytical methods of investigation and one of its branches is the philosophy of infrastructure where it investigates the claims of other disciplines including education, hence the philosophy of education.

Philosophy of Education

In a simple mode philosophy of education is described as "the study of general theoretical problems of an a priori kind, about the possibility, nature, aims and methods of education."[14] according to Udwigwomen:

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[9]Ibid., p. 4.

[10]Uduigwomen, A. F. "Philosophy of Education: An Overview" in A. F. Uduigwomen and Karo Ogbinaka (eds), *Philosophy of Education: An Analytic Approach,* Lagos: Joja Educational Research & Publishers Limited, 2011,p. 6.

[11]Azenabor, Godwin. "Sustainability of University Education" op. cit., p. 5.

[12]Uduigwomen, A. F. op. cit., p. 7.

[13]Ibid., p. 7.

[14]Proudfoot, Michael. and Lacey, A. R. *The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy, Fourth Edition,* London and New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 112.

> Philosophy of education will be the use of philosophical instruments on education, as well as the relation to education of relevant results of philosophical thinking… A philosophy of education will be a more worked out systematic philosophical treatment of those aspects of educational theory which are susceptible of philosophical treatment.[15]

According to C. S. Momoh, "the philosophy of education deals with the general character and nature of education, the fundamental questions, concepts, issues and presuppositions of education; its relation or non-relation to other areas of study alike and the competing theories in education."[16] Philosophy of education in carrying out its function of questioning educational claims, theories and systems asks fundamental questions. It for instance asks:

> How does education differ from indoctrination, training and programming and must indoctrination, etc. be totally, or only partially, excluded? What is presupposed in the learner, e.g. what degree of rationality? Is a teacher needed or can one educate oneself, deliberately or accidentally? Can one be educated to be rational in any sense… Is the primary aim to instill knowledge or to instill the ability to acquire knowledge, or neither? How far is education concerned with facts, and of what kinds? What is involved in education, in morality and (aesthetic or other) taste? Does education aiming at knowledge differ from education aiming at action? [17]

All these and other questions which revolve around the nature of education, aims of education, etc. fall within the purview of philosophy of education. J. A. Akinpelu while describing the philosophy of education identified two senses namely the commonsense or layman's notion and the technical or professional conception of philosophy of education. Akinpelu under his commonsense notion identifies some ordinary modes of deriving a philosophy of education. He writes that "when people talk of philosophy of education in ordinary discussions, they often mean their personal view of what the school should be doing or their attitude to the education system. Such discussions often arise when people feel dissatisfied with the product of school system, and in trying to criticize what they find as faulty in the present system, they

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[15] Uduigwomen, A. F. op. cit., p. 13.
[16] Ibid., p. 13.
[17] Proudfoot, Michael. and Lacey, A. R. op. cit., p. 112.

refer to their own supposedly more adequate philosophy."[18] He notes further that:

> Politicians are found of referring to the education philosophy which, if elected to office, they would adopt. By this they probably mean no more than the programmes of education which they are going to follow, indicating the general trend or orientation rather than a systematically thought-out, profound or comprehensive view… some enlightened citizens especially educators, may ask a principal of a secondary school what is the school's philosophy. By this, they mean that are the objectives or goals which the school is trying achieve, thereby equating such objectives with philosophy of education…[19]

All these commonsense perspectives to philosophy of education do not merit being called so because they are not based on any systematic thought process which could qualify them as philosophies. For instance Akinpelu views that if the motto of a school is taken as its philosophy of education then there would be as many philosophies of education as there are schools. But in a more technical or professional sense, "the professional philosopher of education is in a position to provide this thorough and hard look at the educational system, to analyse it, and after deep reflection to produce an alternative system. Both the process of analysis and reflection, and the product of that reflection are what the professional means by philosophy of education".[20] Notable schools of thought in the philosophy of education include idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. The purview of this paper does require cover an elaboration of these philosophies but it worthy to note that each of them have important features that can enrich the education system of a society. More so, these schools of thought should not be confused with educational theories.

Theories of Education

Aristotle captures the essence for the evolution of different philosophies or theoretical approached towards education. Citing Aristotle, Larry Shaw writes that:

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[18]Akinpelu, J. A. *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education,* London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1981, p. 4.
[19]Ibid., p. 4.
[20]Ibid., p. 5.

> In modern times there are opposing views about the practice of education. There is no general agreement about what the young should learn either in relation to virtue or in relation to the best life; nor is it clear whether their education ought to be directed more towards the intellect than towards the character of the soul.... And it is not certain whether training should be directed at things useful in life, or at those conducive to virtue, or at non-essentials.... And there is no agreement as to what in fact does tend towards virtue. Men do not all prize most highly the same virtue, so naturally they differ also about the proper training for it.[21]

Though Aristotle according to Shaw had made this remark over 2,300 years ago, the issues he raised are still contentious in the process of education. Finding the solution to this problem eventually led to the development of five different educational theories. These include; essentialism, progressivism, perennialism, existentialism and behaviorism.

Essentialism

As a philosophical concept, "essentialism is a metaphysical theory that objects have essences and that there is a distinction between essential and non-essential or accidental predications."[22] Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu further note that:

> …contemporary essentialism claims that some properties of an object are essential to it and that so long as it existed the object could not fail to have them. If essence is inherent in things, then there are necessary truths about objects and their properties. Essentialism is focused on the relationship between essence and individual identity, as well as on the relationship between essence and natural kinds.[23]

William Bagley popularized the essentialist educational doctrine. According to Shaw "essentialism refers to the traditional or Back to the Basics approach to education. It is so named because it strives to instill students with the essentials of academic knowledge and character

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[21]Larry Shaw, "Five Educational Philosophies," Humanistic and Social Aspects of Teaching, available at http://edweb.sdsu/LShaw/f95syll/philos/phbehave.html.
[22]William Mann, "Essentialism," in Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 281.
[23]Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), p. 223.

development." [24] The essentialist educational philosophy was more rigorous and interested in instilling what it terms as essential knowledge into the student so as to make him a model. Shaw writes further that:

> (American) essentialism is grounded in a conservative philosophy that accepts the social, political, and economic structure of American society. It contends that schools should not try to radically reshape society. Rather, essentialists argue, American schools should transmit the traditional moral values and intellectual knowledge that students need to become model citizens. Essentialists believe that teachers should instill such traditional American virtues as respect for authority, perseverance, fidelity to duty, consideration for others, and practicality…Essentialists urge that the most essential or basic academic skills and knowledge be taught to all students. Traditional disciplines such as math, natural science, history, foreign language, and literature form the foundation of the essentialist curriculum. Essentialists frown upon vocational, lift-adjustment, or other courses with "watered down" academic content. [25]

Progressivism

The progressive philosophy of education was popularized by John Dewey. He was critical of the prevalent method of teaching whereby the child is thought of as being a mere passive recipient of knowledge. Dewey brought the individuality of the child into learning. Richard Bernstein comments that:

> He was critical of the excessively rigid and formal approach to education that dominated the practice of most American schools in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He argued that such an approach was based upon a faulty psychology in which the child was thought of as a passive creature upon whom information and knowledge had to be imposed. But Dewey was equally critical of the "new education," which was based on a sentimental idealization of the child. This child-oriented approach advocated that the child himself should pick and choose what he wanted to study. It also was based on a mistaken psychology, which neglected the immaturity of the child's

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[24]Shaw, op.cit.

[25]Ibid.

experience. Education is, or ought to be, a continuous reconstruction of experience in which there is a development of immature experience toward experience funded with the skills and habits of intelligence.[26]

Dewey notably entered the field of education as a liberal social reformer with a background in philosophy and psychology. "In 1896, while a professor at the University of Chicago, Dewey founded the famous Laboratory School as a testing ground for his educational ideas. Dewey's writings and his work with the Laboratory School set the stage for the progressive education movement."[27] This movement gained momentum in America and its belief in the ability of the child to play a part in his learning is linked to the democratic freedom engendered in America. Corroborating this notion John Brubacher writes that:

> This is the first philosophical approach that takes into consideration the three learning types (auditory, visual and kinesthetic learners) of students. In a progressive approach classroom you will see thought provoking games, books, manipulative objects, experimentation and social interaction between the students. This approach also uses field trips outside of the classroom for educational purposes. Progressive philosophy isn't center around the main goal of educating students for adulthood. Instead this approach was meant to enrich the educational growth process.[28]

Progressivists emphasize in their curriculum the study of the natural and social sciences. Teachers expose students to many new scientific, technological, and social developments, reflecting the progressivist notion that progress and change are fundamental… Progressivists believe that education should be a perpetually enriching process of ongoing growth, not merely a preparation for adult lives. They also deny the essentialist belief that the study of traditional subject matter is appropriate for all students, regardless of interest and personal experience.

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[26]Richard Bernstein, "John Dewey," in Donald Borchert (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 3 (Detroit: Thomson Gale Learning, 2006), p. 48.
[27]Shaw, op.cit.
[28]John Brubacher, *Modern Philosophies of Education*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1962), p. 67.

Perennialism

Perennialism reflects the methods of Plato and Aristotle whereby the student is influenced to question facts. Brubacher asserts that in Perennialism "the belief was that you taught everlasting information to the students. The main idea was to stimulate thought provoking discussions from different topics presented to the student."[29] As in essentialism the teacher is the center of the instruction. But there is a difference between both. According to Brubacher, "the educator was responsible for teaching principles not facts. Their goal was to open the students mind to scientific reasoning, and that factual information may be proven false. A major difference between the two philosophies is in perennialism the student input is important. Using this approach helps the individual thinker in each student blossom."[30] Shaw also notes further that:

> Perennial means "everlasting," like a perennial flower that comes up year after year. Espousing the notion that some ideas have lasted over centuries and are as relevant today as when they were first conceived, perennialism urges that these ideas should be the focus of education. According to perennialists, when students are immersed in the study of those profound and enduring ideas, they will appreciate learning for its own sake and become true intellectuals.[31]

Behaviorism

Behaviorism adheres to the believe that students can be trained to become whatever we want them to be. It evolves from the psychological conditioning ability of subjects. John Watson is known as the founder of the behavioral movement. His belief was that any human being could be reprogrammed to acquire any skill. According to behaviorism we can teach our students by reprogramming them. It is possible to change students' behavior by reconditioning them. This may be done by taking the negative stimuli away from the student. In time the student learns to control the behavior. The behaviorism approach also states that the student can be condition to learn or perform anything taught to them. This can be done by using rewards for an appropriate response. Both of these methods can be effective when used over a long period of time.[32] Other theories include reconstructionism, humanisn, scienticism, naturalism, etc.

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[29]Ibid. p. 72.
[30]Ibid. p. 72.
[31]Shaw, op. cit.
[32]National Policy on Education, 4th Edition, 2004, p. 2.

The Nigerian Education System

The different cultural systems in Nigeria and foreign influences on these cultures have affected the education system thus necessitating re-examination. Though there is a national education policy which among others spells out the philosophy of education of the country, there is still the question of how effective this philosophy is and practicable it has been. According to the policy, Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on:

(a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
(b) The full integration of the individual into the community; and
(c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.[33]

Based on this philosophy, the national educational goals which derive from Nigeria's philosophy of a united and harmonious society founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice are:

(a)   the inculcation of national consciousness and national unify;
(b)   the inculcation of the type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
(c)   the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
(d)   the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of society.[34]

Scholars have reacted to the philosophy outlined that it really is not clearly stated. Amaele and Nwogu state that "Nigerian policy on education has a sound theoretical phase, though it lacks well defined philosophical foundation. Simply put, the nation has well defined national aims which it wants to achieve through education, but lacks the philosophical view and approaches to achieving such well intended aims."[35] they even contend that there is no difference between the aims and philosophy of education in Nigeria. According to these scholars

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[33]Ibid. p. 2.
[34]Samuel Amaele and Godspower Nwogu, "Philosophies of Education: Implications for the Nigerian Education System," *Trends in Educational Studies* Vol. 8, No. 1, 2014, pp. 1-6.
[35]Ibid. p. 26.

"Philosophy of education in Nigeria is treated as stated objectives which the nation wishes to achieve through her education system. In this circumstance, such objectives may or may not be achieved. The resultant effect is that schools are established to produce diverse manpower with personal objectives, since they are not strictly directed by well grounded philosophy.[36] Michael Olatunji also notes that:

> …while reference is made in the national policy document to the nation's philosophy of education, there is no definite statement in the said edition of national policy document that shows specifically what the nation's philosophy of education is. In addition to the unstated philosophy of education, most of the values on which the unstated philosophy of education is based are also vague. Furthermore, many of the goals of education that are stated in the national policy document which would have served the purpose of nurturing the nation's philosophy of education do not communicate much.[37]

When the philosophy of education itself is not clearly stated, achieving the goals of education becomes as impossible task as Adiele points out that "critical examination of the extent to which the stated philosophy of education in Nigeria has achieved the desired goals reveals that the policy was more utopian than practical. There are clear indications that educational programme implementation has been generally defective and largely ineffective, and have shown disappointing outcomes.[38] Such disappointing outcome holds grave consequences for the country because education is the basis upon which every other facet of the society is built upon, education prepares the citizenry to live and earn a living. Living entails functioning in the society and relating with others harmoniously and earning a living entails an occupation which the citizen engages in. In other words it is both material and nonmaterial. But how can the country move beyond these issues and develop a philosophy of education that is relevant to the people, the society and the context of the society in contemporary times.

Towards an Indigenous Philosophy of Education

Nigeria is a product of several influences from the traditional cultures of the peoples that make up the country to the Islamic and Christian

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[36]Michael Olatunji, "What is Nigeria's Philosophy of Education?" *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities* Vol. 5, Issues 2, 2015, p. 393.
[37]E.E. Adiele, "Reflections on the Philosophical Base of the Nigerian Education and the Attainment of Equality of Access to Primary Education," *International Journal of African and African American Studies,* Vol. 5 No. 1, 2006, p. 26.
[38]Olatunji, Op. cit., p. 398.

influence of trade, slavery and colonialism. To this end, choosing a specific philosophy of education might be a difficult task. But as noted earlier, there are several benefits in the different philosophies of education that can be contextualized to the needs of the Nigerian society. The overall goal should be the development of the individual to become a reasonable, morally upright and cooperative being who would see him/herself as a part of the whole. Moreover, as noted by Abiogu "Philosophy of education broadens the mind by enabling it understand many different ways of viewing things in the order of human existence. It provides man with an insight on how certain philosophers of various date and time approached the problems of life from generation to generation. Their methods of approach help man to understand different ways of perceiving truth and reality."[39]

Thus in developing an indigenous philosophy of education, Olatunji notes that ideals such as national development and national unity could still feature in the nation's philosophy of education statement with the proviso that what they are meant to connote is made known. Such clarity will reveal from the outset the adequacy or otherwise of such an ideal. Furthermore, in the light of the attitude of most Nigerians to public utilities and public duties which leaves much to be desired, disciplined citizenry as an ideal will be relevant if featured in the national philosophy of education statement.[40] Not done, he notes that:

> Another ideal that could be considered in coming up with a philosophy of education statement is equality of outcome or result. This could be an alternative to the principle of equality of opportunity which is fraught with problems as discussed in an earlier paragraph. As a result of differences in genetic makeup and individual interests, the emphasis should be that in whatever area of endeavor or whatever type of education one finds himself most capable; the recognition given for one's position and the remuneration attached to such position should be made equal to those of others in different but comparable areas of specialty.[41]

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[39]Ibid. p. 398.

[40]Patrick Akinsanya, "Does Nigeria have a Philosophy of Education Worthy of its Name?" *Prime Research on Education*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 2012, p. 273.

[41]Ibid. p. 273.

The Formal, Informal and Cultural Perspective

Part of the arguments of this paper is that an indigenous philosophy of education for Nigeria should include a mixture of formal, non-formal, informal and cultural education. According to Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold:

- Formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organised and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.
- Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning and can to a certain degree be understood as accidental learning. It is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support. Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random).[42]

These modes of education can be combined to achieve an indigenous system of education for Nigeria because it captures the broad spectrum of persons who are willing to learn including young and old. Here the values of knowledge can be transmitted for the benefit of the society. Melnic and Botez advised that the three forms of education are in an interdependent relationship, given that human personality is formed from all the influences received. Formal education must capitalize on all the positive feedback about non-formal and informal, and to eliminate negative influences when it becomes aware of them.[43] Having this sort of interdependence in the Nigerian philosophy of education will be beneficial to the different cultures in Nigeria. That is why the submission of Du Bois-Reymond that "…the question about the relationship between formal and non-formal education is highly

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[42]Danielle Colardyn and Jens Bjornavold, "Validation of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning: Policy and Practices in EU Member States," *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 39, No. 1. 2004, p. 71.

[43]Andreia-Simona Melnic and Nicoleta Botez, "Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Interdependence in Education," *Economy Transdisciplinarity Cognition* Vol. 17 No. 1., 2014, p. 115.

dependent on national context… So there is no one single answer and analysis to the problem, but each country must research the question in accordance with its own traditions and needs,[44] is apt for the Nigerian society. This combination can achieve the cardinal goals of traditional African education, as cited by Babs Fafunwa, which are equally relevant to an indigenous philosophy of education even in contemporary times. These goals are:

i.   To develop the child's latent physical skill.
ii. To develop character.
iii. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.
iv. To develop intellectual skills.
v.   To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
vi. To develop a sense of belonging to participate actively in family and community affairs.
vii. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.[45]

 Linking this to the cultural perspective it can be said that students should be educated in vocations that are relevant to their cultures. For instance, in an environment that is riverine, learning to fish, make boats, fishing lines, hooks, trading and preservation of fish produce etc. can be included in the curriculum of education. The same can be replicated in places where farming, hunting and other vocations are prevalent. This will make the individual an entrepreneur instead of seeking for unavailable jobs after graduation from formal education.

Another aspect of culture that is worth mentioning is language. In the philosophy of education, a student must be able to speak the language of his/her culture. Ogundowole argues that "language is first and foremost a symbol of identity other than a medium of communication. Language is a fundamental invention that makes the Being of the human community possible. In order of significance to the life of the species Being itself, language is as primary and crucial as labour is to the continual existence of the Being of the human community."[46] In

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[44]Manuela du Bois-Reymond, "Study of the Links Between Formal and Non-Formal Education," available at http://www.eurodesk.it/sites/default/files/file/doc_pogiovanili /COE_formal_and_nonformal_education.pdf. accessed 23/9/2017.
[45]Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Limited, 1995), p. 7.
[46]E. Kolawole Ogundowole, *Concerning Self-Retrieval of the Self: Problem of Retrieving African Primordial Universe of Being*, (Lagos: Correct Councels, Limited, 2005), p. 153.

other words, language of the community is essential in the philosophy of education and a "necessary condition and an effective springboard for the development of the reemergent African civilization"[47] with specific reference to the Nigerian society.

The Eclectic Theoretical Perspective

An eclectic combination of theories like essentialism, perennialism, reconstructionism etc. can be adopted in the development of a philosophy of education for Nigeria. What is good and relevant to the Nigerian context can be deduced from these theories and adopted. This is where Patrick Akinsanya talks about a blend of theories of education which he believes that if judiciously and sincerely applied will be better for the country. This eclectic blend is contextualized to realities in Nigeria. According to Akinsanya, "cursorily, reflections on the policy/system of education reveal an eclectic philosophical approach. However, there is something terribly lacking in our peculiar brand of eclecticism. What appears missing is the ability to perfectly blend the various inputs into what makes up the present Nigerian philosophy of education."[42] The argument is that there are values in the various schools of thought but these values are well combined to make a coherent philosophy of education. Akinsanya says "the policy documents were nipped together without much care for consistence, coherence and compatibility, and this thus, presents us with no particular direction.[48]

In the Nigerian policy on education there are aspects that suggests a pragmatic approach; an existential approach; an idealistic approach; a realistic approach, these approaches are not blended to the realities of the Nigerian society. These realities include the multifaceted nature of the Nigerian society but multiculturalism is not peculiar to Nigeria hence beyond the talk of unity, the thought of creating an atmosphere for making the most of the individual irrespective of obvious and inescapable differences becomes essential in the philosophy of education. Elzer Venter while citing the issue of multiculturalism in South Africa that:

> Multiculturalism doesn't simply mean numerical plurality of different cultures, but rather a community which is creating, guaranteeing, encouraging spaces within which different communities are able to grow at their own pace. At the same time

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[47]Ibid. 151.
[48]Elza Venter, "Philosophy of Education as a Means to Educate Humanity in a Diverse South Asfrica," available at https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Educ/EducVent.htm. Accessed 1/10/2017.

it meant creating a public space in which these communities are able to interact, enrich the existing culture and create a consensual culture in which they recognize reflections of their own identity.[49]

This view points out the true meaning of the notion unity in diversity. Different cultures in Nigeria might prefer different educational philosophies but it becomes the responsibility of the formulators of a philosophy of education to be able to blend these philosophies and develop an interesting ideology that can chart a course for the development of the country. Akinsanya thus submits that:

> If, however, there is a perfect knitting of the various inputs, with much care for consistence, coherence and compatibility, the adopted philosophy would be a golden instrument for the achievement of Nigeria's social ideology. The level of uncoordination witnessed in the chosen philosophy informs the disconnections emanating in the policy formulation, and consequently, in the practice of education in Nigeria, and until something is done to eradicate the mismatches, we will continue to give room for scholars' doubt on the existence of a Nigerian educational philosophy.[50]

With this view, Nwafor submits that it is categorically clear that philosophy of education must have an ideological base, and as such must contain the ideals and aspirations of the society.[51] It is only with such a view that the human and subsequently Nigerian society can be developed. Thus the approach to an indigenous philosophy of education must be one that can develop the citizen such that he/she becomes reasonable, moral and cooperative. These qualities are essential for the stability and progress of the country because education is the bedrock of any society and the basis of any functional education is a formidable philosophy of education.

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[49]Ibid. p. 274.
[50]Naboth Nwafor, "Philosophy of Education and National Development: A Philosophical Appraisal," *Information and Knowledge Management*, Vol. 4, No. 6, 2014, p. 92.
[51]Ibid. p. 92.

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