

ETHICS, EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper investigated the role of ethics and education in Human Development. By means of conceptual analysis; the concepts of Ethics, Education and Human Development were explicated in order to demonstrate a clear understanding of their relationship. Ethics and education affect human development through such influencing factors as rationality, justice, temperance and courage to mention but a few. However, the Nigerian education sector is being plagued with so many problems leading to a decline in the quality of Human Development. These problems include Moral decadence, bribery and corruption, wrong value systems and disregard for intellectual capacity. The paper concludes that by injecting the right attitudes and values in our educational institutions, the right caliber of human development can be assured.

Keywords: Ethics, Education, Human Development, Social values.

Introduction

“Nigeria’s philosophy of education is hinged on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system” [NPE, 2004:7]

In line with the above philosophy, many experts in the field of education have identified the role which education can play in this manner. Nyerere (1967:44) once defined education thus:

The purpose of education is to transmit from generation to the next the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of the purpose... to enable the young to live in and serve the society and to prepare them for their future membership of the society... it involves the active participation of the young in the maintenance and development of the society.

Given the above philosophical slant, education performs certain descriptive and prescriptive functions. Education is described as an institution of the society meant for the preparation or adaptation of the young into the adult society. Secondly, education equips the young to participate actively in the development of society.

Saddled with the above responsibility, the Nigerian government has designed and adopted the present National Policy on Education as the Vehicle for economic self-Sufficiency, political stability and social well-being (Nwosu, 2013). However, the road to economic Prosperity in Nigeria, poverty reduction and creation of employment opportunities lies at the heart of promoting change in human behaviours and attitudes. Hence, this article on "Ethics and Education and Human Development". While a range of approaches may be adopted to deal with the envisaged problems, it is argued here that the role of ethics remains indispensable in human development.

Concept of Ethics

Ethics is a branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions or the norms of human behaviour. Ethics is commonly used interchangeably with morality to mean the subject matter of this study. Ethics studies what is the proper course of action for man (Kanu 2018a&b). It studies right and wrong in human behaviours. It is a method by which we categorize our values and pursue them. Ethics is the very nature of man because, it is our means of deciding a course of action, without which, our actions would be meaningless and aimless. To the extent we pursue rational ethical standard, we will be able to correctly organize our goals and actions to accomplish our most pressing values. We act morally in order to realize full human well-being in the order of a created nature that is, ethics establishes the grounds for good relationship with other and God.

Concept of Education

Education, etymologically, is derived from the Latin words: *educare*- which means 'to bring up', 'to rear', 'to guide', 'to direct'; from the foregoing, education becomes the process of bringing up children by the adults of the society; and *educere*- which means 'to draw out', 'to lead out', 'to raise up', 'to bring up', 'rear a child' (Kanu 2018). Education as an act, a process and a product is concerned with human development. As an act, education involves various activities which aim at producing the acceptable man. As a process, it is guided by procedures that aim at producing capable human beings. As a product, educational activities

and processes result in the production of acceptable, self-reliant, dependable, effective and efficient citizen(s).

Concept of Human Development

Human development is a concept which involves a wide range of issues such as ability to live a long and happy life, ability to make choices, be educated and have freedom and opportunities. Human development refers to the organizing principle for meeting human development goals. Human development goals encompass economic growth and increase in per capita income (p.c.i), increase in human capabilities in terms of higher standards of health, knowledge, self-respect and the ability to participate actively in community life. Relevant human capabilities include: being free from starvation, from hunger, from under nourishment, participation in communal life, being adequately sheltered, etc.

Dimensions of Human Development:

Human development spans through the various dimensions of the life of the State Development is evidenced in technological economic, social and political aspects of national life. Technological, development refers to a nation's capacity to utilize the products of science and technology to meet her needs. It means that the country will not rely heavily on foreign goods and services but will have the capacity to produce most of her needs internally. Technology is a critical factor in human development.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the validity of knowledge-claims as good or bad. Therefore, epistemological and ethical value of technology is explored in relation to its implications on man and society.

From the above, Nigerian educational philosophy guides Nigerians in the area of principles of knowledge and human conduct and also, a sign post to her socio-political, economic, scientific and technological development in line with the provisions of vision20:20:20

Thomas Hobbes (1651) has aptly emphasized the role of ethics in human development when he opined strict obedience to moral rules on grounds of societal convenience and stability. He believed that for education to be worthwhile or relevant it should have functional utility. For J.S Mill (1806 - 1873) education should be at the foundation of moral utility or the greatest happiness principle which holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness". To him, "happiness" contextually means pleasure and the absence of

pain while “unhappiness” was conceived of a pain and deprivation of pleasure” Mill contends that whatever provides the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people should form the moral code of conduct. Nigeria emphasizes, free and compulsory education in her commitment to Universal Basic Education (UBE). This is necessary for an enlightened and knowledgeable citizenry.

For Socrates, the ability to distinguish right from wrong lies in people’s reason – that innate reason or conscience that urges one on to right actions Socrates believes that true judgment leads to happiness; that no one could possibly be happy if they acted against their better judgement, believing that he who knows what is right will do it; and that people do wrong out of ignorance. The core of the ethical systems of Plato and Aristotle is happiness. Both believed that human happiness constitutes virtue and that happiness is good to possess, because a life lived in accordance with the virtues is the happiest and most rewarding kind of life.

Another aspect of ethical principle is rationality. For Aristotle, man has in his soul, a rational principle which is rooted in the conviction that nature stands as a capacity for development inherent in particular things and aimed at a particular end or purpose both in respect to physical and moral phenomena. Being rational means doing things that are backed by good reasons. A rationally minded person takes actions, decisions based on good reasons rather than emotions.

Education directs human rationality to justice and the good life. Plato’s ethical proposition was based on the four cardinal principles –temperance, courage, wisdom and justice. Plato proposed that the state should be ruled by men of great knowledge /intelligence in order to ensure objectives good on which the good of the state is based. His idea of justice was based on functional relationship between the three groups of people in the society –the rulers, the warriors and the artisans. When each group is performing according to its duties /functions and not interfering or abusing the duties of the group to which he belongs, it would ensure justice and a perfect state.

Omeregbe (1993) has noted that man is a rational animal. And this rationality helps man to discern between right and wrong actions, good and bad conduct. In the classroom, a rational teacher discriminates between the kind of tasks to be performed by junior students and senior students. For example, while the junior students may be assigned to sweep the school compound, the senior students can be assigned to do grass cutting.

Responsibility: Responsibility is another ethical principle. Simply put, responsibility means obligation or duty. It means being in charge of something or someone in terms of making decisions and taking praises or blames there-in. when people in positions of authority begin to take charge of people under them, responsibility comes in. parents should be responsible for the proper up bringing of their children while school authorities should exhibit responsibility over children placed under their care. In schools, students are assigned duty posts as prefects, football captains, time-keepers to mention but a few. Such duty posts build the students up to assume responsibility or leadership roles in their adult life.

The end of education is to affect the human heart. Any form of education which ignores or contradicts that end is dangerously false. Plato argued that to become fully human and to the creation of a just society, was the formation of a good character. A good character is “Moral Excellence” or virtue. For Socrates, virtue is knowledge of the good. In the Republic, Plato suggested a kind of goodness which can begin with the right training and which can lead towards the fullness of knowledge of the good. That training is moral education and is directed towards a fully intellectual apprehension of what the good is. A truly good character is one who understands the good and therefore, does what is good. For Aristotle, rationality is an essential element in moral choice. Children have the capacity to arrive at moral maturity through appropriate education and training; first in moral habits, then by skills in reasoning.

For Newman, all individuals have the natural potential to do good acts and that in so doing, they effectively fix “goodness” within their own character. The formation of good habits is an essential part of the process of growth towards maturity and self-control.

Problems exist as problems only because people hold certain values. Education must concern itself with values, and must lead to correct choice and actions. It is in this sense that education is a moral enterprise aiming ultimately at the improvement of conduct. Moral values warrant that men learn what it is right to do and then to do it. Education, then aims at changing persons so that they will effectively choose and do what is good rather than selfishly pursue their individual desire. As observed by Aristotle, in his book, the “Nicomachean Ethic”: the ideal of the virtuous man who lives the good life because he is a good man, a man devoted to the pursuit of objectives goodness rather than the fulfillment of his own desires, a realist rather than a sophist. Such a man belongs

to and helps to build what the author calls a democracy of worth as opposed to a democracy of desire.

Among the various aims of education, is the living of the good life. The good life the happy life, the virtuous life, as Aristotle has explained it –Will consist in the cultivation of human capacities to their fullest reach by a process of self-determination, self-realization, and self-integration.

To do that successfully, the four cardinal values of intelligence, creativity, conscience, and reverence come into focus. Human problems come under the four basic values and are addressed using the values. Under intelligence come intellectual excellence and the mass media of communication. Under creativity is work, and recreation and under conscience we have the uses of nature, health, sex, and family life, social class, race, economic life, political organization, and world responsibility while the value of reverence is applied to religion.

Socrates believed and taught that certain identifiable principles of conduct of virtues such as courage, wisdom, justice, moderation are necessary for the stability of the society if the citizens could imbibe these principles. Socrates saw the role of education as that of inculcating worthwhile values into the learner for the learner's growth in social competencies, opinions and moral attitudes. He opined that the learner already has knowledge inside of him hence, the assignment of the teacher was to guide the child to unfold his natural potentials.

Societal Values

Nwosu (2013: 159) has identified the societal values as follows:

- a. Honesty and integrity
- b. Humility and obedience
- c. Moderation and the golden mean
- d. Hardwork and reverence for achievement
- e. Purity and chastity

Honesty deals with character and is associated with one's speech, actions, attitudes and projected thoughts. When the above attributes are conditioned by the principle of right and wrong as pre-determined by the society, one is said to exhibit honesty and integrity. Honesty and integrity predispose a person to exhibit exemplary moral character.

Humility and Obedient are also necessary for human development: A humane and obedient person offers selfless services to others because he is

convinced he is not better than others. Obedience refers to submission to established rules and codes of conducts so that society can operate in a peaceful atmosphere and order. Moderation is necessary for human development. Moderation means to be reasonable and balanced in actions and opinions. Moderation involves temperance and is inline with Golden mean principle which requires one not to engage in extremes. In all spheres of life –Politics, economy, social, etc. Extremism is abhorred in human conduct. Excessive quest for power in politics is frowned at, avarice and love of money is the root cause of evil. Excessive eating of food and drunkenness are condemned. In the same manner, religious fanaticism and obnoxious ethnocentrism do not receive accolades in human society.

Hardwork and reverence for achievement: This is a core value among the Nigerian society. For example, the Igbos emphasize hard work and achievement as cardinal principles of human growth and development hence the adage “he who does not work, should not eat. St Paul, in one of his letters to his Christian brethren warned: “any man who cannot provide for his family is worse than an infidel” (I Timothy 2:8).

Purity and Chastity: Nigerian society has room for purity and chastity and therefore, any human community that is not built on cultural norms and ethos is bound to fail. Among the Igbos, Sex and Sexual relationships, indecent dressing, indecent body exposure and other social ills are frowned at in most Nigerian societies. Schools and colleges must mount large campaigns against indecent, dressing. There is need for change in our attitudes and behaviours if we must realize human development.

Education is a powerful instrument for human development. Hence, any nation that wants to develop should not trivialize with its education system. In Nigeria education is at the center of human development. Man as individual possesses separate existence, rights, obligations, aware of himself as a center of valuation, decision and choice. Man has distinct point of view, distinct physical body, a rational being who makes his independent judgment, appraisals, intentions and decisions that shape events. Some of the excellent qualities of man include critical thinking, creativity, autonomy and self direction. The education of man and his development should take cognizance of the above human qualities.

Education enables man to acquire a set of ethical foundation for his societal living. This agrees with George Hegel when he opined that education is “a

progressive perfection of humanity from a simple, uncultivated, primitive state of mind through the hard discipline of labour and toil to the consciousness and exercise of its freedom". Man needs to acquire and display sound moral values of integrity and moral probity in order to shun evil in the society.

For Nwosu, (2007: 179), education should aim at the following:-

- a. Providing men and women with minimum of skills necessary for taking up their place in the society and to seek further knowledge.
- b. Providing the citizenry with vocational training necessary for self support.
- c. Inculcating in people the desire for reasoning coherently and providing the skill of critical thinking.
- d. Training of people to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements of mankind.

These aims are consistent with the aims of Nigeria education as contained in the National Policy on Education. When explicated the aims of education correspond to societal aims in that individuals are developed in their abilities not only as personal rights but also as a societal necessary.

Societal Based Challenges to Human Development

Human society is saddled with a lot of challenges which includes:

- a. Morality in tatters and discipline in shambles
- b. Bribery and corruption
- c. Wrong value systems
- d. General poverty
- e. Poor attitude to work and to Government property
- f. Disregard for intellectual capacity.

There is high level of moral decay and indiscipline among Nigerian populace. In our schools and institutions of higher learning, students buy grades with money instead of burning the mid-night candle while government officials squander public funds entrusted in their care. Next is bribery and corruption in high places such as government offices, churches, schools,, market places. Value systems dictate and influence a person's way of behaviour. Mezieobi (1993) points out that values dictate and influence person's ideas, beliefs, actions, convictions and behavioural dispositions.

General poverty is a major factor that affects investment and development. Because majority of Nigerians are poor, they find it difficult to invest in private or public enterprise that will promote their welfare. Poor attitude to work affects people especially in public services. The poor attitude is noticed in lateness to work, disobedience to rules and regulations, non-challant and carefree attitude over jobs.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

Human society is an organized, stable and well integrated system in which members agree on basic values. These values lead to social harmony and stability.

The school is an institution of society that undertakes the job of educating the children, transmission of values, skills, competencies, attitudes, ideas and philosophies of society. Education imparts to the pupils, the basic skills which will enable them perform the specific role which the society has assigned to them –Intellectually, morally, socially, emotionally, to mention but a few.

A man is made into what society demands of him. Individuals in society act within a set of rules (ethics) provide knowledge and training for effective partnership in the labour force. Knowledge acquired in education must fulfill the aspirations of society in such areas as economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of life.

- a. There is need for sound and quality education that can cater for the intellectual skills, manual skills, for the work force. The critical skills are needed in information and communication technologies (ICTS), computer and allied equipment.
- b. Transformational leadership. In public sector, private life. There is need for dedicated, moral, integrity leadership, honour, values, role models, and respectable standards.
- c. Attitudinal changes. Transparency and integrity, strong, positive ethical behaviour /principle of life such as sense of responsibility, respect for laws and regulations, dignity of labour and love for work, the desire to be productive should be cultivated among Nigerians.
- d. Fighting corruption: corruption is anti-social and anti-economic. It enriches a few at the expense of majority and breeds social imbalance.

When we enthrone discipline in our educational institutions, we can guarantee true development. As observed by Nwosu (2013:183): “True development must mean the development of man; the unfolding and realization of his creative potential; enabling him to improve his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him ...”.

Education can only realize the avowed national goals if it is democratized, functional and ethically oriented. Democratic education is the only hope for achieving a united, strong and self reliant nation as well as ensuring a just and egalitarian society. A just society is one where citizens rights are recognized and respected; and there is fair play and equity in the distribution of human and natural resources. Functional education means the type of education that equips the learner with employable skills to cope with economic, social, political and cultural activities of his society.

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