

A CRITIQUE OF PHILOSOPHY OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION

ADELEYE, Joseph Olusola, PhD

Educational Foundations and Management
University of Education, Science and Technology,
Ikere Ekiti, Nigeria

Oluadeleye4real@gmail.com

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the critical analysis of Philosophy of Nigerian Education and submits that philosophy of education of any nation, Nigeria for instance must be specific and direct. One observes that in Nigeria situation, the philosophy of her education appears to be obscured. Nigeria education system appears to arrive at five objectives or philosophy of education that seems unclear to the stake holders. Ask a teacher to explain his or her understanding of philosophy of education as it relates to Nigeria, one will be perturbed with such a teacher's explanation. The reason for this is that what we regard as philosophy of Nigerian education is nothing but a statement of objectives which appears to be irrelevant and difficult to understand. Akinpelu(2005) posited that Philosophy of Education of any nation must be clear and specific just like that of Tanzania's philosophy of Education which based the education of her citizens on the slogan "Education for self reliable" this is very clear that no friends or foes of Tanzania can claim not to understand. It is on this note that the paper being a qualitative research is set to examine the philosophy of Nigerian education, expose its inadequacies and recommend the way out.

Keywords: Critique, Policy, Philosophy, Nigerian Education and Goals.

Introduction

Before going to what philosophy of Education is, it is pertinent to discuss briefly the term philosophy. Philosophy came from two ancient Greek words, which when combined meant love of knowledge. From this usage, the word philosophy has passed into common usage and different people have come to mean different things by it. To be precise, one may call philosophy as that deep thinking and rational explanation of everything. The way of understanding philosophy emerged as a means of containing the earlier contention that God were responsible for everything. Thus, if the rains failed to fall or if some disaster befell people,

divine, rather than rational explanations were sought for the understanding and acceptance of the phenomena. To be sensible is to be able to survey, judge and understanding situations. (Aladejana 2009).

Philosophy as a discipline is more of activity rather than a body of passive knowledge. In other words, we learn Philosophy by doing it. For instance, by Philosophising we can identify three modes of Philosophy. These modes are the speculative, the prescriptive and the analytic. The speculative Philosophy is the mode in which we systematically speculate about all existence. This mode of speculation is limitless as it deals with the real as well as the abstract. Philosophy can also be approached prescriptively. This is when it seeks to set standards, grounds or criteria for the judgement of values, conduct and art (kneller, 1971). It seeks to establish the objectivity or subjectivity of concepts such as good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. In other words, do these qualities adhere in things or are they mere projections of the individual mind? Prescriptive Philosophy also seeks to establish some fundamental laws for judging which actions are worthwhile and which are not. For instance, why should education concerned with judgement of values? And finally, analytic mode of studying Philosophy is concerned with meaning of words. It analyses the meaning of words such as education, teaching, learning, intelligence, indoctrination, freedom, curriculum among others. This is in order to break them into smaller unit for clarifications. Analytic Philosophy also examines issues and problems, which are discussed in the world of education. (Akinpelu, 1981)

Analysis of Philosophy of Education

Philosophy of education for McClellan defined it an inquiry into the distractive form that human reason takes in the practice of education. That is, in the interaction that generates the particular acts of teaching and learning. This definition sounds very distant and it is probably one of the reason education students in our higher institutions regard the discipline of Philosophy of education as difficult and abstract. However, the highest merit to this definition is the acknowledgement of the role human reason takes in the practice of education. This involvement of human reason by McClellan agreed with Dewey's attempt to define philosophy of education.

According to Dewey, if we are willing to conceive education as a process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional towards nature and

fellow man, Philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education. Apart from Dewey's attempt to describe the purpose of education as the formation of "Fundamental disposition" such as intellectual and emotional, he substantiated the role of Philosophy in this regard. That is with sound academic philosophy, which, if properly pursued, will inferably provide the insight and clarity of thought always desperately needed by education.

Philosophy of Education should be regarded more essentially as a normative venture primarily concerned with value and purpose. Because any philosophy of education is the function of the culture, that way, it ably serves that practical ends of the people's way of life, and structure of the culture. That is why it does not sound appropriate to speak of philosophy of education as if the truths in it are universal and final. Because of the normative and descriptive character of philosophy of education, one cannot just adopt wholesale the philosophy of education of another country without modification. We speak of the Philosophy of Nigerian Education, for example, because of the value structure example, because of the value structure to be adhered to as a result of our culture.

Can we speak of the Philosophy of Nigerian education? If there is any value structure in our culture, then we should be able to speak of our own philosophy of education. Section one of the 2013 (Revised) Federal Republic of Nigeria's National Policy on Education stated categorical thus, "Nigeria's Philosophy of Education, therefore, is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system". These are the bases, but these bases are not unique to Nigeria. Philosophy of education should be essentially normative and culturally oriented. Some of the truths could transcend the particular cultural value. The question may be posed, however: why should the truths in the ingredients or bases of our own Philosophy of education transcend cultural boundaries? Why can the ingredients of our Philosophy of education not be unique to us? One possible answer is that the nations of the world are interrelated in several respects while to a large extent each nation enjoys certain uniqueness in several other respects.

Number three of the section one of the National policy of Education gave the impression that the values to be inculcated are derivable from the quality of instructions offered by teachers. If this is to be so, one should foresee an inherit

danger. One may ask: what then should be the roles of the parents in bringing the learner near to the perfection? After all, Plato perceives home as the first school which should be complemented by the teachers. It does not seem safe to entrust the qualitative and even the quantitative aspect of our educational instructions to the teachers alone. Parents, government and other related educational factors should be considered as also being important as well.

The policy expected that through quality instructions, the following values be inculcated.

- = respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
- = faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- = moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations.
- = promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

If these values are to be truly inculcated, one wonder if the nation can rely on the teachers alone. One would expect the involvement of the parents and other stakeholders in the inculcation of the above values. Nowhere in the section on the Philosophy of Nigerian education is the role of the parents mentioned in the inculcation of these values and this makes it grossly inadequate.

Critical Issues in Philosophy of Nigerian Education.

The Nigerian education system is meant to foster unity and social integration. Osokoya (1987) opined that the finding of different educational commission in Nigeria, together with the contributions of a number of Nigeria academics highlighted the weaknesses of the old educational system as being too academic, theoretical, inadequate and unsuitable for providing an overall development of Nigerians. Hence, there was an agitation for a re-evaluation of the old system and dire need for a national policy on education. It was an attempt to meet the demand and the 1979 constitution which brought presidential system of government that gave birth to 1981 revised edition of national policy on education. We have five main objectives or the philosophy of Nigerian Education as stated in the second national development plan;

- to build a free and democratic society
- a just and egalitarian society
- a united strong and self reliant nation
- a great and dynamic economy and

a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Philosophy of Nigerian education, is therefore, based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal education opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. One is compelled to question this equal educational opportunity. Can there be equal educational opportunity in Nigeria?

According to Akinpelu (1985) the problems come in different forms, such as, disparity in political awareness, sophistication between the rich and poor, between urban and rural areas are all attributed to inequality of educational opportunity. Many solutions have been proposed but the problems linger on. It is believed that Philosophy of Nigerian education could fast-track the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. These are crucial issues in National development which philosophy of education and education in general should address. The educational system is yet to create national consciousness and patriotism among students at all levels because citizenship education exists mere on paper and not in practice (Nwafor 2014). Hence, the Nigerian society is enveloped by insecurity and on absence of freedom and democracy, because Nigeria is yet to conduct a free and fair election, this is evident in the recently conducted both in Edo and Ondo states. The education system that is morally decadent cannot engender “a just and egalitarian society” a society in which everyone is relatively equal. This is because lip service is paid to moral education. Lies abide in all sectors of our educational system. Plato in his Philosophical ideas on education dwelt much on the development of moral character and the mind of the learner. Plato buttressed this by saying that education of a child must be the responsibility of the state. The purpose of this is to prevent the mind of an immature being from lies. Nigeria stakeholders in education do not give credence to this. Lies are told in order to collect money (fees) from the students at all levels of our education which make it very difficult to achieve these objectives as stated in the Philosophy of Nigerian Education.

Politically, Nigeria is in disarray, unity has eluded her as Nigerian witness crisis of all sorts every day. Every parts of the country live in fear. In March 2014, united Nations High Commissioner for Human rights Ms Navi Pillay stated that “Nigeria was currently facing its most daunting set of challenges for decades” The country is split between Muslims and Christians, with an area called the middle belt

edging the predominately Muslim north and Christian south. Ten percent of the country follows indigenous sects, constituting over 174 million people and close to 350 ethnic groups speak 250 languages. The country is also divided along economic lines. The divisions and inequalities, and existence of vulnerable peoples, alongside ongoing battles against insurgent groups, kidnapping of citizens in all parts of the country and high level of corruption, have contributed to the current security crises in Nigeria. All these would have been protected if Philosophy of Nigerian Education is succinctly spelt out for all to understand in the area of citizenship education.

Again, the education system is too elitist and therefore made little provision for technical and vocational education. How can we in Nigeria achieve a great and dynamic economy when all our sources of income depend on the foreign countries? How can a country that cannot produce common tooth-pick but instead depend on China be self sufficient? Nigeria is in a total mess. Hence, self-reliance and economy sufficiency are mere illusion. The result of this is that many Nigeria youths are yet to see “a land full of bright opportunities” which education purport to give. Recently in Nigeria, one can see how the youths protested against bad governance, unemployment, hunger, killings, insults, harassment by police officers, (SARS) and lack of freedom of expression among others. It may be asked, where is the land bright and full of opportunity for all when lecturers of our tertiary institutions embark on strike action for months? Brain drain appears to be on the high because Nigeria leaders failed to provide opportunities for the youths to thrive. Citizens’ dissatisfaction largely stems from a lack of opportunities for self development even for those who have taken step to educate themselves and their children. Many of our qualified citizens are abroad unable to come back and cope with the existing conditions. Presently many Nigerians do not have faith in the country anymore talk less of faith in the leaders who stash away Nigerian wealth illegally in foreign countries. One can also ask that how can a country in which her leaders that are supposed to give a bright future to the youths of Niger Delta region for example, failed to account for the money amounted to 40billions naira? Instead, one of the leaders slumped during investigation at the National assembly which led to the suspension of the investigative panel indefinitely as reported by all the Nigeria News Papers on July 21, 2020. Nigerians have lost faith in their government and have more than ever before become mutually suspicious of one another. No respect for culture, industry and honesty even worship centres (Churches and Mosques) are not longer safe. Our values have been eroded. The

land is bright but not full of opportunities (NTI, 2006) very high levels of unemployment have come to stay with us. Crimes of all sorts have taken over our streets. (Adiele, 2006) inability to achieved these goals as it is aimed in the Philosophy of Nigerian Education leave must to be desired.

Conclusion

The paper clearly examined the Philosophy of Nigerian Education and submitted that its objectives appeared not to be specific compare with the aims of Britain, America and France educational philosophy. This could be the reason for non attainment of the aims of Philosophy of Nigerian Education as stipulated in National Policy of Education. One clearly identified that German education aims at making the learner a loyal member of the state while America education is to develop the individual's aptitude and ability. In France, the national aim of education is to help the young and immature person to learn and practice the acceptable ways of life of their people. African country like Tanzania has a clear objective which aims at achieving education for self reliance. Nigeria should as a matter of urgency review her philosophy of education and carefully plan it by way of bringing out a unique feature common to the five objectives of her education for the purpose of clarity. Therefore, the present national educational policy should be disbanded on the account of its non-workability and Nigerian government should develop the necessary political will for education to grow.

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