

**PHILOSOPHY OF IDEALISTIC EDUCATION FOR THE  
REALIZATION OF INTEGRAL HUMANISM**

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**Abstract**

*There are indispensable needs to assess the nature or contents of education the human person as an agent of development and a subject of lived experiences, with the purposes of whether the minds are properly formed or not. Hence, this paper is positioned to explicate the placement of idealism as a philosophical doctrine and the societal understanding of liberal art tradition in the development of effective and holistic educational practices and curricula for the realization of integral humanism. It is through well-informed and educated minds that the integral humanism is realizable. Therefore, the paper tries to explain the meaning and societal conception of philosophy with special reference to its applications and consideration in education of the minds, and to situates education within the societal workability of philosophy as a discipline which help the individual as a teacher or learner in making good use of mental (spiritual and moral) capabilities through the understanding of idealistic tradition of education as suggested and this allows the individual to assess the contents of human knowledge beyond one's professed discipline of specialty. The paper recognized that the human minds are the seats of integral development, and*

*they are required to be well informed through the well-ordered educational curricula, based on the adoption of idealistic educational policies.*

**Keywords:** Human Person, idealistic, Education, Development, Idealism, Liberal Art, Educational Curriculum

## **Introduction**

Recalling the power invested in the existential thought of J. J. Rousseau, that: “we are born weak, we need strength; helpless, we need aid; foolish, we need reason. All that we lack at birth, that we need when we come to man’s estate, is the gift of education.” With these wordings of Rousseau that are centred on the cognitive power of the human person, we cannot but understand the indispensable nature and placement of education in and for human and societal development (see, Izibili and Isanbor 2018, 232), especially through the contents and development of the human minds. When education is inferred for the purposes of development, the issues of teaching and learning are necessarily and indispensably presupposed. Learning as a mode of education gives freedom to the learner, and that is liberation (See, Isanbor 2015: 215; 2015: 8; Isanbor, Ajibewa and Ekuigbo 2015: 75). To liberate something is to set it free, and brings the placement of liberal art, as an idealistic model of education to the fore, because such philosophy of the development of the human personhood frees the mind of the students and gives them the tools to take on the world before them. With integral and conscientious freedom attainable from education, societal issues in relation to human development are greatly understood; hence, education becomes an indispensable process of self-realization which necessarily aims at reformation of the human minds, and which, according to Okeke (1989):

1. It is to promote the individual’s reasoning ability.
2. It is to help the child realize himself by becoming the best adult of which he is capable.
3. It is to inculcate in the individual the wisdom for practical living and good moral conduct.

4. It is also to foster in the individual the ability for intellectual and theoretical engagement of which he is capable.

Thereby, with education, the institution of social contract between the State and the peoples is properly defined, knowing the developmental relevance for respecting, promoting and protecting human rights and specifying human duties and responsibilities, including human right to quantitative and qualitative education and the various responsibilities towards achieving it (see, Arikpo 2011, 160; Enoh 2012; and Kabuk 2018, 440). The philosophical look at education and its roles in human and societal development is always keen, because philosophy tries to examine to the disposition that led to any curriculum, as philosophy is a way of life, and education helps in any regard of human and societal development (Cf, Isanbor 2015: 215; 2015: 8; Isanbor, Ajibewa and Ekuigbo 2015: 75).. In all, right from the dawn of philosophical excursus to this moment, philosophers have being rationalizing and postulating varied perspectives which in their respective bent they consider veritable to teaching and learning, for guidance as a blueprint towards achieving meaningful, effective and efficient education.

The developmental concerns of projecting the contents of the minds as foundations of knowledge led to development of some very imposing philosophical movements or perspectives. These perspectives include (but not limited to) the following: idealism, realism, perennialism, essentialism, reconstructionism, progressivism, experimentalism, etc. It is germane to note that the aforementioned philosophical perspectives on education reflects and recommends what is to be taught, the curriculum, modes of teaching, methods of teaching and other modalities that are germane to integral teaching and learning. Consequently, here a group study of thoughts of philosophers as to how education should be conceived, planed and diligently and effectively discharged to achieve optimally the goals and objectives of education.

### **Idealism and the Knowledge Acquisition and Development**

Idealism is about the power of the human minds for the development of the individual and the society. As the name implies, idealism is a philosophical school of thought that gives preeminence to ideas. Idealism is a philosophy that espouses the refined wisdom of men and women. Reality is seen as a world within a person's mind. Truth is to be found in the consistency of ideas. Goodness is an ideal state, something to be strived for. Idealists have disdain or mistrust on the senses as a reliable means of acquiring knowledge (Ogonnaya 2012, 77). They deny the existence of physical objects. Idealism is the metaphysical and epistemological doctrine that ideas or thoughts make up fundamental reality (Nja 2012, 34).

We have *subjective idealism* (which denies the existence of the external objects, and reduces them to subjective ideas of the finite minds that perceive them. The advocate of this is George Berkeley) *objective idealism* (that the mind is the object of external and universal consciousness, and recognizes the onward expression of the absolute mind, God. The advocate of this is Fredrick Hegel), and *phenomenological idealism* (this recognizes the existence of things-in-themselves, but regards them as unknown and unknowable, this is champions by Immanuel Kant). Essentially put, Such Kantian philosophy of life through the employment of education of the mind argues that the only thing actually knowable is consciousness, whereas we never can be sure that matter or anything in the outside world really exists, for experiences rule the world of knowledge and the human person has to values it in order to development integrally and meaningfully. This is with the understanding of created world that the only real things are mental entities are not physical things which exist only in the sense as they are perceived.

Therefore, idealism as a theory of knowledge is a reflective art of human living that assesses the thinking ability of the human individual in relation to things about and around him or her, as Dewey (2012) puts it that; “the consequences of a belief upon their beliefs and upon behavior may be so important, then, that

men are forced to consider the grounds or reasons of their belief and its logical consequences” (p. 11). This means that reflective thoughts in its eulogistic and emphatic sense are meant to be directed towards the development of the human person as a subject of lived experiences.” According to Dewey, “reflective thinking is always more or troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestion as their face values; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful (p. 11). Therefore, The art of idealistic living is pain-taking and thoughtfully-demanding as Dewey put it, because it involves the exercises of the wholeness of the individual. The idealistic conception of education considers the development of the individual, which translates into soul-training curricula like religious studies, philosophy, literary studies and the likes. Human mental development is stressful and gainful, because it the human person to actualize him/herself, as the famous sayings goes: “Man knows thyself.” In its extreme and absolute sense, it claims that only ideas truly exist in reality.

This school of thought has the absolute idealist, Plato as its founding father, and in the modern era, it has G. W. F. Hegel and Immanuel Kant as its radical apostles. The Idealists in their respective philosophies have given so many premiums to discourses on education. Plato in his famous work: *The Republic*, and in his bid to rationalize on the ideal state in relation to the development of the human person wrote impressively and extensively on the concept, nature, pedagogy and essence of education. From Platonic conceptualization of the development of the human mind as a seat of wisdom, the Idealists generally agree that education should not only stress the development of the mind but also encourage students to focus on all things of lasting value and interest, by projecting beyond the physical realities of the world. The basic tenets of idealism which seem to underlie all idealists’ principles of education are the facts that they unanimously opine that the aim of education should be directed toward the search for true ideas. Also, common among proponents of this school of thought is the conviction that the fundamental aim of education ought to be character

development because the search for truth demands personal discipline and steadfast character.

### **Basis of Idealistic Education for the Realisation of Integral Humanism**

In this work, the researchers, with disposable materials of analysis, make an attempt is made to present certain fundamental lines of educational development with idealistic doctrine, and moderately, on the relevance of liberal art tradition for the realization of integral humanism. For the sense of integral humanism are conditions where the wholeness of human person is taken to cognizance in the policies, programmes and legislations of development of development In sequel, the research also ruminates on movements in philosophy of education by the projection of idealistic educational curricula as model of developing the human minds towards proper organization of the society (Uzomah and Isanbor 2017, 124) . As it stands at this very moment, some educational philosophical ideologies or approaches are employed in the classrooms, lecture theaters and auditorium all over the world in a deliberate attempt to achieve the noble aims and objectives of education (see, Arikpo 2011, 160; Enoh 2012; and Kabuk 2018, 440), and they are directed to inform the minds which are the seats of knowledge that guarantee creativities and innovations.

Basically, in the words of Iroegbu (2005), education is to pass on knowledge to another. It is to instruct, to give information and needed knowledge to others, especially to those who do not have them. Knowledge given in teaching has three basic foci: information, formation, and reformation. With these indications of values and interests for the development of the minds, knowledge from education becomes informative when ideas and facts are communicated toward achieving some goals. It is formative, when ideas and facts are used or designated to sharpened and modified the constituted mental and personality structure of the recipients as learners. They make him or her behave this way or that, thereby structuring the person's way of life. Lastly, it is also reformative in the aspect that helps to change already formed ways and manners of behaviors.

Education thus reconstructs personality. It makes a new, and all things being equal a better person for oneself and for the society in which one lives and operates. Hence, for the purpose of easy understanding and assessment of the influences of idealism on education, Kantian conception of the roles of education is societal and human development will be very tenable in this regard, and they are following:

1. To have a polished member of the society,
2. To develop some degree of discretion in the individual,
3. To develop a person's faculties,
4. To help to reduce animalistic tendencies in man,
5. To instill morals into human being,
6. To mobilize the differentiation of what is wrong from right,
7. To acquire certain skills and vocations for human livelihood,
8. Socialization and development of the community and the persons, and
9. Orientation to the civil societies and governments.

These perceived roles of education by Immanuel Kant presuppose the holistic conception of philosophy in human and societal development, and that philosophy should not just be a mere academic exercise but a way of life based on knowledge, for knowledge is a mean to a moral life (Ogonnaya 2017, 223). After recounting the philosophical contents of Kantian conception of education as agent of human and societal development, which can be highly and majorly perceived to be idealistic, and it will be necessary to also recount (as a retrospective voyage) the rationale, that is, the goals of national educational policy, for its establishment of the various levels of our school system which include:

- a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual
- b. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions
- c. Moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations
- d. Shared responsibility for the common good of the society
- e. Promotion for the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children
- f. Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance.

### **Formation of Idealistic Educational Philosophy for the Realization of Integral Humanism**

We observed that the idealists' great emphasis is on the ideas and possibilities for mental and spiritual qualities of human beings. This has led many idealist philosophers to put great emphasis on individuals in terms of their intellectual development in various educational settings. Their subjectivist orientation to learning as opposed to a more objective one is held by many to be one of idealism's most important contributions (Strike 2002, 520). So straightforwardly, Idealism often is considered a conservative or even antiquated philosophy of education because much of its thrust is to preserve lasting truths or cultural traditions. This is borne out of an examination of idealists' concern for perennial and ultimate truths and their notion that education is largely a matter of passing on the cultural heritage. Despite this critique, Adherents still point to the strengths of idealism, such as the following:

- To have high cognitive level of education based on idealistic principles; their concern for safeguarding and promoting cultural, socio-religious and moral learning. It has the potential to liberate personalities, transform lives and lay the foundation of social justice
- To ensure spiritual development, since the idealistic educationists give greater importance to spiritual values in comparison with material attainment. This aim to develop a child, according to the idealists, with education, is should be mentally, morally and above all, spiritually-oriented, for the enhancement of the contents of the mind;
- To promote good personality traces for integral humanism: There are sustainable and indispensable values for socio-development stresses on the human and personal side of life that is dependable of the *otherness of living*;



and demands that the views of the teachers and the students as revered persons being central to the educational process of development;

- To have comprehensive, systematic, and holistic approach to otherness of living; their great concern for morality and character development. Education should be for the development of human intelligence and rationality, because, education, to the idealists, should lead and guide man to face with nature and to unity with God
- To promote the principles of self-realization and self-reliance: According to the idealists, the human person as the true agent of development and as a subject of lived experiences is the most creation of God. Hence, self-realization involves full of knowledge of the self and it is the first aim of education, as idealism emphasizes individual's mental ability, and gives importance to the aim of self-realization which leads the child toward perfection and enables him/her to realize the self.

In a nutshell, idealism as a traditional philosophy of education, would favor schools teaching subjects of the mind, such as is found in most public school classrooms. Teachers, for the idealist, would be models of ideal behavior. For idealists, the schools' function is to sharpen intellectual processes, to present the wisdom of the ages, and to present models of behavior that are exemplary. Students in such schools would have a somewhat passive role, receiving and memorizing the reporting of the teacher. Change in the school program would generally be considered an intrusion on the orderly process of educating (See, Isanbor 2015: 217; 2015: 10; Isanbor, Ajibewa and Ekuigbo 2015: 77). A typical idealist curriculum would foster the training of student to appreciate eternal and immutable truths. It would culture the mind to think less of particulars, but of things that has universal values. Students trained strictly with the tenets of idealism stand the chance of having insight on the connectivity of all things, the oneness of humanity and the unity of knowledge. Although, idealism has emphasizes the position of teachers as a guru, and describes or considers the teacher as a living ideal and coworker with God, hence it humanizes the child as a learner and gives the condition of the child to develops high ideals and values.

To the idealists, the school administrators, working with the governments in general, the principals and school heads in a particular, should take their responsibilities more seriously in the following areas:

- i. *Create an environment conducive for thorough thinking or reflective exercises.* It should be necessitated and mandated welfare schemes that should be adequately formulated and implemented in order to keep qualified teachers in their teaching business and student in their learning enterprises. It is a condition for national hope for better and fruitful future generations.
- ii. *Demonstrate empowerment ideals.* It is through freedom in teaching and learning that are guarantee through the development of the minds that ideas for holistic and integral development of the society are created or generated. For creation of ideas necessitates the culture of invocation and creativity. The teachers should be adequately empowered in order to exhibit their innovative and creative for their students' performance and development.
- iii. *Encourage all efforts towards empowerment.* Empowering teachers demands the teachers receive training on how to exercise the essential skills of teaching and learning that will necessarily their mental capacities and abilities in propelling creative and innovative stills in the lives of the students. Education as an art of exercise leaves by the teachers, and it is incomplete if the teachers are not trained in education as a discipline, and worth still to handle education at all levels that needs a careful monitoring. And on the necessity to applaud all empowerment successes in order to initiate occupational and professional encouragements through due promotions, appraisals and other incentives.

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, reasonable attempt has been made to delineate the concept, nature and essence of idealistic educational currircula for the realization of integral humanism, by considering the effectual adoptions of idealism as a philosophical doctrine for educational curriculum development. We started by establishing the dynamism of philosophical influences, how philosophy having being inspired and emerged from mythology introduced critical and logical reasoning to speculations about reality (See, Isanbor 2015: 220; 2015: 12; Isanbor,

Ajibewa and Ekuigbo 2015: 79). As man's critical quest for meaningful living, philosophy has not just being concerned about problem solving and answers providing, rather with its viable and critical apparatus it has always focused on the nature and questions and answers given in order to plausibly decipher their connect with reality.

Therefore, for the sake of realizing of integral humanism in our contemporary society where the wholeness of human life, rights and dignity have facing the culture of devaluation due to secularized model of development, there is need to properly to form and reform the minds idealistic through vibrant and humanistic educational curricula modeling. This is to develop some reflective and liberal practices in learning and studying, even in teaching place heavy demands on educational system adopted by a particular society. All teachers and students in schools should be very reflective, using the power of mental ability, in generating solutions to human and societal problems and challenges, requiring them to develop a complex conception of professional growth, and to monitor the various changes in society and how things develop (see, Ohioha 2017, 217; Arikpo 2011, 172). In pursuance, through its vantage position; it has the unique privilege of performing an oversight function over virtually all disciplines. This of course brings to the lime light the second nature of philosophy as a second order discipline. Hence, we have philosophy of education and the like inter-disciplinary sub-branches of philosophy.

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