Measuring Up in Educational Philosophy in the 21st Century Nigeria's Education: the fundamental problems of theory and praxis of education

VALENTINE ETTA NTUI

Department of Teacher Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

OR: Department of Educational Foundations, School of Education, Cross River State College of Education, PMB 1171, Akamkpa Nigeria

JAMES BASSEY EJUE

READER

Cross River State College of Education, PMB 1171, Akamkpa Nigeria

Abstract

We live in a world where international comparisons of standards in education constantly confront us all as stakeholders in the face of the burgeoning crisis of quality in education. From one end of the world to the other, educational aims, objectives and goals of nations of the world as construed in theory and practice of education are replete with different challenges that depicts their milieu. In contemporary times in Nigeria, foundational philosophies have revolutionized both philosophy and philosophy of education as academic disciplines, but the set pattern of teaching philosophy of education in Nigeria today does not seem to make use of the evolving revolution with a heterogeneous colouration. Philosophy in its various epochs in history has played varied roles in man's development that cannot be down-played or tucked away in the dark. This expository study is informed by the need to recognise the contemporary challenges in global set patterns or standards of teaching and learning philosophy of education in an attempt to improve the quality of teaching and mentoring for retention; address the increasing concerns about quality reproduction in education and reduce teachers/learners at-risk syndrome in our classrooms. What do we know about the risk implications of engaging non professionals in teaching? What are the fundamental problems of philosophy of education in Nigeria? In this study, a comparative analysis of models and strategies that can reinvent standards in teaching, using qualitative research methods to update educator's experiences and implications of findings would be discussed.

Key Words: Quality, Standards, Teaching, Mentoring, Diversity, Retention

Introduction

Studies of human nature and existentialist paradigms offers marked theories of freewill and determinism as the pendulum that depicts human actions, thus teachers' volition to measure up to teach in accordance with contemporary developments in philosophy of education, learn, progress or cheat, retrogress and so on can be so inferred. (Ntui, 2013; Wade, 2010). Educational institutions as social institutions where teaching and learning occurs can be construed as centers where the exercise of these rights and the attendant risk factors can be prominent. One would think that poor teaching and learning poses great risk in society and to deal with the vulnerability of uninformed minds and the gravity of the uncertainty of this phenomenon is a subject of volumes. This is why professionalism in teaching and retention in higher education is in response to challenges such as ability to meet students diverse learning needs, discern interest and new innovations in teaching, learning, research and mentoring because most teachers/lecturers begin their careers with little or no formal

preparation in pedagogy. Despite being well-versed in the content discipline, researches have shown that higher education teachers in their first few years of teaching often lack access to the kind of frequent assessment and mentoring that would shorten the learning curve and enhance the experience and productivity of both the mentor and protégé. (Wright, 2011; Dean, et al, 2002; Wenglinsky, 2000).

Again, teacher education in the 21st century is evolving into complex processes that are not limited to pedagogical training but also includes teaching partnership, coaching, support, *midwifery* and mentoring as a new pedagogy for professional growth globally. This provision is not made in teaching among academics in most higher education institutions in Nigeria thus making it a gamble for new entrants to do their work as they deem fit. When they cannot cope, they may leave out of frustration or unfulfilled expectations. Employing the analytic, speculative and prescriptive research methods in philosophy of education, the study advances the argument that a new age of learning to measure up in philosophy of education globally, should create a culture of synergy and partnership, spirited by cooperative learning, friendly support and the active construction of knowledge by mentors and mentees.

Methods of Philosophical Research in Education

According to Mason;

> a philosophical research gives an insight into the nature of man rendering and reminding us of aspects otherwise forgotten, underestimated or totally neglected, persuading us to look at the philosopher in certain ways as a result of which we treat him in a particular way. Because he is not content with "what is" but what "ought to be". (Mason, 2008)

In the light of the above submission, one could say that it is a trite fact that researches are naturally fired or driven by curiosity, which is aimed at producing or breaking new grounds of knowledge or to reconstruct existing knowledge for the overall good of man and the society.

The Analytic Method

Analysis can be considered as the:

> Separation into components or subjecting a thing to a close examination, assessment or the process of analysing or synthesizing qualitatively or quantitatively. Again analytic is pertaining to analysis, obtaining differences in meaning by the use of additional words rather than by inflections (Ntui, 2008)

Ludwig Wittgenstein in his book *the Tractatus,* posits that; "analytic philosophy aims at making thoughts clearer". Bertrand Russell once reported that when the analytical philosopher is confronted with a statement, his first question is usually concerned not with its truth or falsehood but with its meaning. (Russell, B. 1977). For example if one asks the question; are all university teachers in Nigeria professionally trained? The analytic philosopher of education would be concerned with what follows from the given question as well as the preceeding history or circumstances. He would be concerned with how the issues related to the question can be verified or falsified and ultimately how the concepts in which the question is involved can be suitably defined, and expressed in some more or less formalized language and so on.

Modern analytical philosophers regard themselves as philosophical revolutionaries wiping the slate clean of earlier philosophies and laying the foundation for something entirely new: "a self critical, strictly scientific philosophy". (Ntui, 2013) As far as we can see, this belief of the logical atomists and positivists like Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whitehead, Moritz Schlick and other adherents of the *Vienna Circle* has always been a flattering illusion. According to Ozumba, philosophical analysis is nothing new. We can trace it back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and reflections of an analytical character can be found in the works of nearly all the great philosophers. (Ozumba, 1998) Again, Ayer and Bertrand Russell are of the view that;

what has happened in modern philosophy is not the advent of something radically new, but the development and intensification of something which was always there.(Russell, 1971)

In this study we agree that new realms of thought have been subjected to analysis, and new methods of analysis have been created. Hence many contemporary schools of analysis are not new but have joined in a discussion, which has sharpened criticism and stimulated the imagination to explore the scope of analysis further. Scheffler in his book, *The Language of Education* reported that:

> Analysis tries to avoid ambiguity and explores meanings of basic concepts used in the study of education with philosophical tools for clarity.(Scheffler, 1960)

Scheffler's proposition is of concern to this study.

The Prescriptive Method

The prescriptive method can also be called normative philosophy which according to Paul Swiss,

> is the most prominent division of ethics since the time of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, that seeks to establish norms, standards of guidelines for the conduct of human affairs.(Swiss,1956)

This method attempts to discover some acceptable and rationally defensible views concerning what kind of values or things that are good or desirable to aim at in human actions, and what kinds of acts are right and why we admit that they are right. Thus normative philosophy is concerned with the norms and standards or principles of human behaviour. Philosophers of education employ this method when aims of education vis-à-vis the values and goals of education in the society are put into consideration. For example if one says that 'Measuring up in education implies raising standards, the statement is value-ladden and its implications far-reaching. For Frankena as quoted in Rich, J.N., a normative philosopher of education will attempt a tripartite approach in dealing with any educational problem. He will consider what dispositions are Excellencies and worthy of cultivation, he will show why these dispositions are Excellencies, and he may also need to discuss how these Excellencies are to be cultivated. (Ntui, 2013)

The quality of teaching in our universities today poses a moral question to all stakeholders particularly educators, teachers, parents and so on. This is because there are possibilities that a university teacher could be a cheat and not a teacher while teaching could still be cheating and not teaching or vice-versa. Since these seem to be the most viable tools for guaranteed excellence in the school system, the prescriptive method of educational philosophy may attempt to recommend "socially desirable" practices in teaching and condemn the seemingly undesirable practices in teaching as observed in our schools today.

The Speculative Method

Speculative philosophy deals with man's existence as well as fundamental or metaphysical issues that defy scientific investigations. It asks questions like '*what is the purpose of life*?' '*Is man free*?' '*Does God exist*?' '*What are the 'ends' of education*?' and so on. The speculative method of philosophical research in education can be determined by the relationship which education has with philosophy. One may say that in Nigeria, philosophy is taken to be a determiner of the constituents of a worthy way of life while education then becomes a means to develop that worthy way of life. In other words philosophy determines the ends, goals or aims of life and education is an attempt to realize these goals. But it is again difficult to define concretely as to what constitutes a worthy way of life. As Henderson puts it:

> Educational aims cannot be determined apart from the ends and aims of life itself for educational aims grow out of life's aims. To determine what constitutes worth living is through speculation and it has been one of the chief tasks of philosophy. (Handerson, 1947)

Earlier T.P. Nunn also had reported that: "educational aims are correlative to ideals of life. (Nunn, T. P.1920) Ideals of life vary and educational aims vary correspondingly. Philosophers study all the available

information about man and the universe in which he lives and with this knowledge as his starting point, speculates about the nature, origin, purpose and destiny of man. He interprets the available knowledge in the light of his perceptions and draws his own conclusions about the goals of individual and social life. The educator enables the learner to realize both personal and social goals in education. This is why philosophy is said to be the contemplative or speculative side and education the dynamic or active side of life. (O'Connor, 1957). For Ross;

> Education is the active aspect of philosophical speculations, the practical means of realising ideals of life. (Ross, 1958)

Here we consider education as a testing ground of ideas about the goals of life as regards their practicability to education. The key concepts of teaching and quality can generate endless metaphysical questions concerning the purpose of teaching. What *"ought to be"* or *"what is"* the nature of university education? What is quality teaching? and so on. These questions obviously cannot provide answers like scientific experimentation because they are concerned with man and his ideals and values, which cannot be quantitatively studied. Employing scientific methods in studying man and his values in the society would be grossly inappropriate because human values are outside the quantitative attributes of science. Hence the speculative approach seeks to study and comprehend the whole of reality by examining its distinct parts. In educational philosophy, the method of speculation can aid one to see theories in education as a guide to practice and also that practice offers correctives to theory.

Concept of education and its implication to praxis

Education today is not, and should not be seen as an instrument facilitating merely the integration of the young generation to the present social system, and reinforce conformity. As the needs of our times and milieus constantly evolve, it becomes imperative that aims, objectives and goals of education, like in Nigeria are defined by the National Policy of Education and it is dynamic. In Nigeria today, men and women are increasingly being empowered through education to deal critically and creatively with the world, and to continually discover how to participate and partake in its transformation. This is because educational processes are rooted in and are defined by, philosophical thoughts and traditions as well as social realities; it is therefore necessary for educators to better comprehend the complexities associated with the concept of education. Apart from its etymological conception as '*to lead out or bring forth' and 'to train or to form;* it implies that the primary aim of the teacher should be that of a midwife to help or aid the learner '*bring out'* what is innate in the learner. For Plato quoted in Schofield, education is;

> ....the training which is given by suitable habits to first instincts of virtue in children; - when pleasure, and friendship, and pain, and hatred are rightly implanted in souls not yet capable of understanding the nature of them, and who find them, after they have attained reason, to be in harmony with her. This harmony of the soul, taken as a whole, is virtue; but the particular training in respect of pleasure and pain, which leads you always to hate what you ought to hate, and love what you ought to love from the beginning of life to the end… is called education. (Schofield, H 1982)

Again, one can say that the concept of education eludes a universally acceptable definition because education studies are understandably multifocal and the concept of education is in itself polymorphous. The focus of its study at a given time, to a large extent, depends on the definition which we give to the concepts. A definition of education can be descriptive as in Jeffreys,

> Education is nothing other than the whole life of a community from the point of view of learning to lead that life (Jeffreys, 1972)

This definition to a large extent fits the practice of traditional, especially pre-colonial African education. The definition of education can also be stipulative as in:

All education can be regarded as a form of socialization in so far as it involves initiation into public traditions which are articulated in forms of thought (Peters, 1972)

A definition can also be programmatic that is, it takes on a moral dimension in stating what it should do to benefit society. An example is, *'Education should prepare its beneficiaries to be of good behaviour'*. Granted that we can have several perspectives to the definition of, education Ira Steinberg painted this utilitarian picture of education.

People have aims and purposes. Education is not a person; it is not a thing. However like a thing it has its uses. The purposes of education are the uses that people would have for education.

He went further to submit that we can give several uses of education at a time but that we cannot give a true meaning of the concept, and we should not seek to give one meaning for it, so he concluded:

Education has no more true meaning than it has true purposes. And it has no true purpose. (Steinberg, 1968)

One would have ended the discussion on the meaning of education here if philosophical studies on education were subject to gerontocratic positions. (Ntui, 2013) Philosophy and philosophy of education are exceptions to this rule. Therefore the position of Steinberg and other philosophers of education as well as ancient philosophers in their attempt to define education can be seen as footnotes which are celebrated because they have continued to fan the embers of philosophical dialectical tradition and keep aglow the intellectual admiration and awe of the discipline up to our contemporary times.

Plato for instance, sees education as the initial acquisition of virtue by the child when the feelings of pleasure and affection, pain and hatred that well up in his soul are channeled in the right courses before he can understand the reason why. This is similar to the Biblical injunction that we should *train up a child in the way he should go and when he is grown he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

Education is derived from the root word *educare* which means to draw out, to lead out and to form or train respectively. Education cannot be carried out without bearing in mind the aims of education. It is the aims of education that determine the contents and process of education. As Achibong and Ejue (2009) have opined that:

the task of education is mainly to guide the total growth and development of young people so that they will be competent, well adjusted and sociable citizens of their community.

One may say that aims of education also feature either as objectives, purposes or goals of education. It is seen in its cultural matrix, social economic and political contexts, and as a personal function. In Nigeria some of the aims of education as depicted in the National Policy on Education include:

1. As a means of eradicating ignorance and imbuing knowledge which is requisite for fruitful role as citizens.

2. For national integration. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation. The aim of education is to educate the citizens to achieve sympathetic and harmonious relationship among the people of diverse ethnic groups that make up Nigeria.

3. To foster unity, love and patriotism among Nigerians,

4. To achieve the aim of self-realization and self-actualization

5. Education aims at fostering the spirit of science and technology so as to enable us cultivate and appropriate the benefits of science and technology.

6. To inculcate self-discipline. It is believed that a properly educated man is more likely to be temperate than the uneducated.

7. for the promotion of democratic, ideals of freedom, liberty, equality, and justice.

8. for the transformation of consciousness. For example, national integration during emergencies like wars, famines and so on. The government may through education direct the minds of the people to be ready to make sacrifices.

9. the cardinal aim of Nigerian educational policy is for the total development of the individual so that he or she can exploit his or her potentials as a human being. Again the purpose of education is the promotion of innovative attitudes, techniques and skills in the citizens. (Federal Government of Nigeria NPE, 2004)

There are intrinsic and extrinsic aims of education. Education is intrinsically good because it imbues confidence, ability to communicate with others and affords the facility which enables its processor to keep abreast with the goings-on in his society and in the world at large. We may not have been able to have the time and space in this study to exhaust all the definitions, meanings and interpretations of education as given by philosophers and other scholars of education, however, we conclude that the concept of education seen as the acquisition of knowledge's, preparation for life, growth, schooling, transmission of culture and so on suggest that these diverse meanings correspond to the many functions of education.

Nigeria's national policy on education

The National Policy on Education was nursed in 1969, fashioned out in 1977 and officially given the Federal Government seal in 1981. In 1969 the Philosophy of Education for Nigeria received official recognition. Part of the recommendations issued by the participants at the National Conference on Curriculum Development held between 8th and 12th September 1969 was that the five national objectives of the second National Development Plan should be made the official philosophical base for Nigerian education. After years of incubation this recommended educational philosophy was officially promulgated as the National Policy on Education in 1981. The policy states the main objectives of education as:

1. A free and democratic society.
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of full and bright opportunities for all citizens.

Deriving from this, the aims of Nigerian education at all levels include the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society, shared responsibility for the common good of the society; respect for the dignity of labour.

A cursory look at the objectives shows that though they are laudable and reassuring, they nevertheless are beset with problems. One of the problems is that most of them are ambiguous and hence in dire need of clarification. Again there is a lack of statement of what each of them is supposed to achieve for Nigeria and why it is thought that it will evolve into such an achievement. Perhaps, an evaluation of each of these objectives will have expose these problems, but this study does not have the time and space for such analysis.

The policy is clear on the aims of education at all levels. At the primary level, the aims and objectives are;

1. to help the child to realize himself;
2. to help the child to relate to others in an atmosphere of mutual understanding;
3. to promote self and national economic efficiency;
4. to promote affective citizenship through civil responsibility;
5. to facilitate national consciousness in the area of national unity and survival;

6. to promote social and political awakening;
7. to create scientific and technological awareness;
9. to ensure character and moral training and sound attitude development.

The purposes of secondary education include:

1. education for self-realization;
2. education for human relationship;
3. education for self and national efficiency;
4. education for effective citizenship and civic responsibility;
5. education for national consciousness;
6. education for national unity;
7. education for social and political progress;
8. education for scientific and technological awareness.,

Although there is not much difference between purposes of education at primary and secondary levels, the curriculum is diversified to take care of the differences in natural endowments, opportunities and roles possessed after graduation, and that students should be inspired with a desire for achievement and self-empowerment. However, it is clear from the purposes of primary and secondary education adumbrated above that the overriding principle is the emphasis on the necessity to create national consciousness and solidarity through education. One may argue that any system we adopt must in addition be able to cater adequately for the educational abilities and aptitudes of every child.

According to the policy, higher education includes universities, polytechnics and colleges. The aims of these institutions include the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate the environment, the acquisition of intellectual and physical skills which will help the individuals to develop into useful members of the community; the acquisition of broad and objective view of the local and external environment. All these can be realized through:

1. Teaching: The imparting of knowledge.

2. Research: The pursuit of knowledge.

3. Dissemination: Contribution to national international dialogue and criticism,

4. Service Orientation in community service and professional training of the national high-level and intermediate manpower needs. According to the policy, admission of students and recruitment of staff into institutions of higher learning would be on a broad national basis. It is also expected that there would be teacher and student exchange programmes to enhance inter-varsity communication and improve knowledge in the country. The curriculum would be geared toward producing practical persons, while the course content would reflect national needs and local environment and so on. The above exposition shows that the policy has been and is still a promising blueprint for education in Nigeria. However, looking at the Nigerian educational sector today, it will be overstressing the obvious to state that the country is still far away from achieving these laudable objectives and ideals and the reasons for this is a subject of volumes.

Conclusion

Different cultures have their different areas of concern in education depending on what is crucial in each culture. It is untenable to talk of an ultimate philosophy of education which is all embracing, universal and culture-unlimited. For Nigeria, the seeming under achievement of the educational goals seen in the context of the neglect of the role of philosophy of education relates to the situation in which internal conditions necessary for the optimum achievement of educational goals fall below a certain minimum. These internal conditions range from the overall philosophy which guides policies, programmes, practices, beliefs, curricular content and methodologies, to their actual implementation within the system.

A constellation of these considerations include but is not limited to inappropriate curricular, poor teacher quality and attitude, student teacher relation, the aims of education amidst cultural diversity and heterogeneous concerns. Their overwhelming presence in Nigeria's educational environment results in considerable waste in the perspective of the gross under utilization of the potential abilities of all but few. From the foregoing, we posit that expert teaching needs to be emphasized at all levels of the Nigerian education. Attitudes of all stakeholders in education needs to change since quality teaching and learning alone does not guarantee development but that 'willfulness' to learning to pay the prize of development on the part of government and all stakeholders, can significantly propel the country to Eldorado. This approach can check the tensions arising from our educational experiences, for the advantages of philosophy; it is these maladjustments that necessitate the function of philosophy in the experience of our culture. The question of why's and how and what's cannot be avoided if Nigerians wants to overcome these problems, for it is these questions that will bring about a sense of direction in solving these problems and guarantee Nigeria's place on the path of progress as well as measuring up to contemporary challenges of development.

References

Archibong, I. A. and Ejue, J.B. (2008). An assessment of mentoring needs of junior academic   staff in selected universities, in Journal of sociology and education in Africa 7(2) 43 -52.

Brameld, T. (1947). Educational philosophy: Its need and functions in the training of teachers in Harvard educational review. Vol. XVII. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Bakar, G. P. & Harker, P. M. S. (1984). *Frees logical excavations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Beth, E. W. (1969). *Semantic entailment and formal derivability. The philosophy of mathematics*. Jaajji Hintinna (Ed) Oxford University Press p. 1-9.

Copelston, F. S. J. (1962). *A history of philosophy*. Vol. II Part I: New York Image Books.

Dean, B. Fraser, C. & Ryan, D. (2002). Investigation into the Provision of Professional   Development for University Teaching in Australia: A Desk Commission project funded by HELP.

Delfgaaun, B. (1972). *Twentieth century philosophy*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Frankena, W. K. (1972). *A model for analyzing of philosophy of education in reading of philosophy of education*. Rich, J. N. (Ed.) Belmount California: Woodworth Pub. Co. Inc., p. 348.

Harnet, A. & Naish, M. (1976). *Theory and practice*. Vol. 5. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Henderson, S.V.P. (1947) *Introduction to the philosophy of Education*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago pp. 16-17.

Ijiomah, C. O. (1996). *Contemporary views about philosophy of education*. Calabar: Uptico Press.

Jeffreys, M.V.C.(1972). *The aims of education*. Glaucon, Pitman Publishing

Mason A.J.(2008)Relevance and Philosophical Research quoted in Uduigwomen & Ozumba: *Philosophy & Nigeria's National Policy on Education in the African Symposium: An on-line Educational Research Journal*. file://A:Africa.htm retrieved November 25, 2013

Ntui, V.E.,(2012) *Academic Mentoring in Nigerian Higher Education: A Philosophical   Polemics*. Ibadan Journal of Educational Studies. Vol. 9 No. 1 & 2. University Press.

Ntui, V.E.,(2013) Plato, Buber and Bourdieu as Philosophical Tripod in Academic Mentoring in Higher Education in Nigeria. An unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Nunn, T.P. (1920) "Education, Its Data and First Principles" in *the Modern educator library series*, Edward Arnold & Co. London, p. 2

O'Connor, D. J. (1975). *An introduction to philosophy of education*. London: Routiedge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Ozumba, G. O. (1995). Contemporary philosophy in introduction to philosophy and logic. Calabar: Centre Publishers.

Peters, R.S 1972. *Education as initiation in Philosophical Analysis and education,* Reginald *D.* Archambault (ed) Routledge and Kegan Paul. P. 89

Proverbs 22:6 King James Version

Rader, M. (1956). *The enquiring questions: Main problems of philosophy*. New York: Holt Reinehart and Winston p. 4.

Ross (1958) *Ground Work of Educational Theory*: London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd.

Rusk, R. R. (1976). *Doctrines of Greek educators* (4th ed.). London: Macmillan.

Russell, B. (1971) *History of Western Philosophy*: London George Allen & Unwin p. 784

Schefler, I (1960) *The Language of Education* in Charles Thomas, illinous: USA.

Schofield, H. (1982). *The philosophy of education: An introduction*. London: George Unwin.

Soltis, J. F. (1978). An introduction to the analysis of educational concept. California: Addison-Wesley.

Steinberg, Iras (1968). The Aimlessness of Education in Educational myths and realities, Addison – Wesley Publishing Company

Swiss, P (1956) The New Outlook in Kneller G.F. (1963) *Foundation of Education*. New York & London: John Wiley and sons, Inc. p. 47

Wade, Andrea C. (2010) Faculty learning communities and teaching portfolios as a mentoring model in academic leadership (live) An online Journal

Woods, R. G. & Barrows, C. (1975). *An introduction to philosophy of education*. London: Methuen.

Wenglinsky, Y. (2000): Enhancing Flexibility and Adaptability in Teaching in higher Education. New York, Parker Publishing Company Inc.

Wright, M. C. (2011). Measuring a teaching center's effectiveness in advancing the culture of teaching on campus. Sterling, VA: Stylus