

Aims, Goals, Objectives and Tenets of Nigeria's Philosophy of Education

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Abstract: This paper examines the aims, goals, objectives and tenets of Nigeria's philosophy of education. The connections between philosophy and education have been in evidence from earliest times. Philosophy and education are closely related. Education depends upon philosophy and philosophy depends upon education which is philosophy in action. All educational efforts need philosophy as a guide in the determination of their ends and means. Thus, philosophy serves as a light, source and influence for educational objectives. Philosophers have traditionally focused their critical attention on all aspects of the educational process. In a sense, this is only to be expected for it is impossible to investigate the phenomenon of human existence or ask questions about the best way for mankind to live without giving some considerations to topics concerned with the intellectual, aesthetic and moral development of individuals. More also, as education by nature is a process of change; philosophy gives a guide as it takes a long-term view of the future and what it obtains for both man and his society. The paper discusses the aims of Nigeria's philosophy of education which are clarifying important educational issues and problems, the goals of Nigeria's philosophy of education which are guiding the achievement of the Nigeria's educational objectives, the objectives of Nigeria's philosophy of education which are setting goals for Nigeria's education bearing in mind people's social needs and the tenets of Nigeria's philosophy of education which are based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen through equal educational opportunities.

Keywords: Philosophy of education, Aims, Goals, and Objectives

I. INTRODUCTION

September 8-12, 1969, provided an important landmark in the educational development of Nigeria. Under the auspices of the Nigeria Educational Research Council (NERC), the search for a philosophy for Nigerian education was commenced in a National Curriculum Conference. The Conference was to deliberate on the objectives of education for Nigeria, covering primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, teacher education, education for women, education for living, science and technology in national development. The conference was initiated, planned and executed by Nigerians, with participation by people, including non-Nigerians, from different walks of life. In its search for a national philosophy of education, the conference was to review the old and identify new goals for education in Nigeria, as well as providing guidelines on what the system should be accomplishing with respect to:

- i. The needs of youths and adult individuals in our society.
- ii. The socio-economic needs, values, aspirations and development of our society.
- iii. The curriculum substance, the subject content of the system which is the means to the goals (Okeke, 2003).
- iv. The education system in vogue at the time was described to be inadequate because it neglected the social and cultural background of the Nigerian society. It tended to produce an educated class of pen pusher (it was elitist); and it also failed to lay the foundations of economic freedom because it made no provisions for the means of acquiring manual skills and expertise necessary for successful industrial and agricultural development. The conference, therefore, deliberated on the means of achieving economic independence, national unity and integration, cultural awareness, values and good education.

Bearing the purpose of the conference in mind which was to review old and identify new national goals for education at all levels, and provide guidelines on what our education system should be accomplishing, "the objectives of Nigerian education were, thus, formulated into a national philosophy as follows:

- i. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- ii. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and of the Nigerian Society.
- iii. The training of the mind in understanding of the world around us.
- iv. 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.

Through the attainment of those objectives, self-realization, effective citizenship, better human relations, national consciousness, national unity, self and economic efficiency, social and political progress, scientific and technological

progress, national reconstruction could be achieved through education.

The above philosophy of education is based on the national philosophy which aims at making Nigeria:

- a. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
- b. A great and dynamic economy.
- c. A just and egalitarian society.
- d. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens, and
- e. A free and democratic society. (Denga, 1986)

Aims of Nigeria's Philosophy of Education

Nigeria's philosophy of education aims at the critical analysis of concepts, issues and problems of education. Such concepts as freedom, authority, equality, democracy, rights in relation to education, have to be analyzed in all their ramifications with a view to helping the educator conceptualize their relevance and applications. Again, since education is a dynamic process, many issues arise from time to time and these require an analytic approach. For example, such issues as the nature of the society, what constitutes the rights of the child, parents, teachers and government in the education system, equality of educational opportunity, the authority spectrum of the teacher require analytic approaches. Furthermore, many problems confront education and the resolution of such problems requires some in-depth analysis and rational treatment. On the problem of handicapped children in society, do they have the right to education; how does the concept of equality of educational opportunity apply to them? What are the problems of the society and what curriculum offerings should be designed and provided to solve such problems? For example, if a society is relatively technologically illiterate, what can be done to improve the situation? These and a lot more confront educational practice. All these require critical mindedness, analysis, clarification and justification. Justification applies because the educator's actions should be well thought-out and based on sound assumptions and substrata - these could justify the basis for his actions.

Bamisaiye (1989) has asserted that at the very centre of educational issues are philosophical problems about:

1. The nature of knowledge and the validity of particular knowledge claims (epistemology).
2. What knowledge is of most worth (ethics)?
3. The nature of mental activities (philosophy of mind).

On knowledge, he contends that there are different kinds - mathematical, sociological, biological, and moral, which become the resources or the subject matter upon which the curriculum draws.

On what knowledge that is of most worth, he recalls that an educational process is one that produces valuable qualities in people. This implies that philosophy is significant in helping

us appraise our actions. Such appraisal through thinking, reflection and questioning will help us place more value on those activities which will likely lead us to attain our objectives. Philosophy of education helps us in this pursuit.

On the nature of mental activities such as thinking, trying, believing, wanting, in relation to the material objects and human beings, how are learners motivated? How do they learn, develop, have feelings, think? These are necessary in education. Answers to these can be found in some psychological theories. But such theoretical assumptions of psychology could not be understood and criticized via philosophy.

Thus, every system of education is based on some philosophy. The system of Nigeria education, for example, is based on the Nigerian Philosophy of Education. Through education, cultures are transmitted to the young. Any education that is not rooted in a sound philosophy is bound to crumble because it is inherently defective. The question of ends and means in education - the goals of education and how to attain them - falls within the domain philosophy of education. It is through philosophical conceptions and in-sights that goals have to be formulated. With such formulation, the means of how best to attain the goals has to be thoughtfully involved.

On what philosophy of education is concerned with, Okeke (2003) contends thus:

- i. Analysis of concepts specific to education, example: education, teaching, training, school, and university.
- ii. The application of ethics and social philosophy to education raises the issue of worthwhileness and the justification of what is worthwhile. Problems of procedure raise ethical issues that have to do with liberty, equality, authority, and punishment.
- iii. Assumptions about transmission raise low-level empirical questions about learning and motivation as well as problems in philosophical psychology about the conceptual schemes employed by educational psychologists, and the types or procedures by means of which their assumptions can be tested.
- iv. There are all sorts of philosophical problems connected with the curriculum. Since education involves the transmission of differentiated forms of thought such as science, history, morals, mathematics, the philosophy of these forms of thought is obviously relevant. A discussion of their transmission cannot proceed adequately without a clear grasp of what is distinctive about their content. There are questions about the relation of school subjects to forms of thought, about what could be meant by "the integration of the curriculum, and how it contributes to moral and aesthetic education.

Goals of Nigeria's Philosophy of Education

Every society has its own outlook, expectations, aspirations and norms, which guide or condition the responses of its members to life. Besides, the philosophy of a group or an individual is not static. It changes and grows with new insights and influences from other aspects of life. Such changes occur in response to the political, economic, religious, cultural and social changes or innovations.

The Philosophy of Western Education was introduced in Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was conceived and used as a tool for the conversion of the people to Christianity. Its major aim was to produce the catechists and teachers needed for the expansion of the new faith; and to serve the political and economic interests of Western Europe (later). With such interests in mind, a Liberal type of education was introduced which are Liberal Arts, grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music the education of the leisured class. The aim was to cultivate the mind, teach leadership, gallantry and social graces, the ability to converse, dance, play and enjoy music, and hunt. No vocational and professional courses were introduced. The Europeans did not consider the differences in circumstances and environment (Ujowundu, 2008).

Liberal education prevailed in Nigeria until the first quarter of the 20th century, before Britain realized by 1925 the lack of policy, philosophy and direction in education in its African colonial territories.

The coming of Western Education and cultural practices condemned all these, labeled them fetish, primitive and crude, hence the newly introduced educational system was a sharp contrast to it and delved into areas strange and confusing to Nigeria. But with the National Policy on Education (1981) the Federal Government redesigned our educational system with a Philosophy of Education.

In Section 1 of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference's recommendations, we are given a detailed outline of Nigeria's National Philosophy of Education. However, to understand all aspects and ramifications of this national philosophy fully, it is essential to have in mind some conceptual framework.

Examining some features of the Nigerian national objectives against this background, we can observe that at the primary level, the vocational or socializing functions of the enterprise are predominant. One key objective at this level, for instance, is the fostering of 'functional permanent literacy to ensure better producers and consumers of goods. It seems that it fits squarely within the socializing process as well as the vocational aspect of education, rather than the normative conception of liberal education. Of course, aims at this level must satisfy the worthwhileness criterion of the specific concept but they point to limited processes and activities, and cannot be said to have as an end the development of wide-ranging knowledge. At this stage, 'training' or 'instruction' rather than 'education' are more appropriate terms. These are narrower concepts. We speak, for instance, of training in speech therapy or instruction in driving and swimming but not

of education in these fields. However, these are rational processes involving the cultivation of skills and aptitudes which are, not only essential to preparation for life in society, but also a preliminary to the broader, more liberal processes of education to follow at higher levels of the system.

At the secondary level, though vocational education is accorded its natural and proper place, a more liberal conception begins to appear. Goals should be 'more consciously introduced in depth and quality' and at this stage, it is quality rather than purely extrinsic value that tends to be emphasized.

At the tertiary level, the notion of liberal education finds its fullest expression. Although universities are to have a clearly-defined service orientation, they must also 'develop, transmit and reform our national and world heritage, provide intellectual life, develop national consciousness and loyalty to truth and principles, provoke and promote enlightenment and informed public opinion'. All these objectives are the hallmarks of the liberal conception of education which places the very highest value on learning and knowledge for its own sake (Akinpelu, 1981).

By examining the Nigerian system against the background of these conceptions of education, we can ensure that both aspects of the enterprise, liberal and vocational, are accorded their rightful place. In looking at any system of education, it is important to be clear about the conceptual overtones of the notion of education and the ideas and values associated with it. The same is true of other key concepts such as 'learning', 'teaching', and the ideas of 'discipline' and of rewards, punishments and forms of assessment.

As far as teaching is concerned, the examination of the Nigerian curriculum objective has indicated the importance of employing rational techniques. Instruction and rote learning may be appropriate at the lower, vocational stage but at the secondary and tertiary levels, teachers must aim at the development of a deeper understanding of subject matter. In the national objectives, there is a stress on the 'faith in man's ability to make rational decisions'. Rationality implies an understanding of the 'reasons why' of -things; to possess rational knowledge is to be able to produce reasons and evidence in support of what is known. Thus, if this capacity is to be fostered, dialogue between teachers and learners must be encouraged. Rational communication is the hallmark of liberal education which, from its Greek origins, is the only form of education which truly befits free citizens.

An appeal to the 'needs and interests' of learners has become a common way of tackling the business of constructing a curriculum, and there are several references to these concepts in recommendations for the Nigerian curriculum. In the Recommendations of the 1969 Conference, there is an emphasis on equality of educational opportunity for all Nigerian children so that each can develop according to his own ability, aptitude and interests'. In a similar vein, Fafunwa in his concluding remarks on national policy argues that the

future of education in Nigeria will in the long run hinge on whether ‘the curriculum is adjusted to the needs of the child and the society’ (Sharma and Hyland, 1991).

Thus, we have the suggestion that in devising curricula, we must, to some extent, take into account both the needs and the interests of learners. At first sight this appears to be a straightforward recommendation, but these concepts deserve to be examined in more detail.

(a) *Needs*: In reply to the suggestion that a curriculum should take into account learners’ needs, the following points have to be made:

- i. There are some needs, such as the ‘need for food’ and the ‘need for shelter’ which are basic for human survival but which cannot, except on a restricted scale, be said to fall within the scope of conventional schooling. Considering those needs which can be regarded as ‘educational’, we can say that if a learner is said to need something, this must refer to something which he lacks, which he does not possess. For example, learners can only be said to need self-confidence, critical skills, rationality and the like if, in fact, they do not possess these qualities.
- ii. Needs-statements, however, do not simply describe a person as lacking something, they also prescribe, they indicate that what is lacking ought to be provided. Thus, however simple and straightforward it may seem to say that the emotional needs of the learners should be catered for in schools, such an assertion will always imply a value judgment to the effect that certain emotional traits ought to be fostered by education.
- iii. Not all learners’ needs are necessarily desirable or valuable from an educational point of view. Not everything that learners need will be actually what pupils want. A child may want to play matches or an adolescent may want to spend most of his time reading horror comics, but in educational terms we cannot say that these individuals need to engage in such activities. Indeed, from an educational perspective, we are bound to say that what learners need, for example, competence in literacy, knowledge of history, and science, and will in many cases, conflict with what they themselves actually want.
- iv. Children’s ‘felt’ needs (that is what they want) cannot therefore be used as a basis for curriculum planning. It is their needs as perceived by others which must be taken into account in organizing educational provision. Educators must assess what learners need in order to become useful citizens and educated people.

(b) *Interests*: Talk of learners’ interests tends to be vague and ambiguous and it is essential to keep certain important points in mind.

- i. There is a crucial distinction between what a learner is interested in (example he may be interested in sport or cars) and what is in his interest (example what is good

for him, such as knowing road safety rules, being able to read and write) The two sorts of interest do not necessarily always coincide.

- ii. Not everything that learners are interested in will be educationally valuable. For instance, a learner may be interested in inflicting pain upon animals or bullying his peers, yet we would surely wish to exclude these interests from the curriculum. Indeed, teachers would want to positively discourage such interests.
- iii. Although there is some scope for basing learning, to some extent, on children’s interests (that is what they are interested in), this will be primarily a motivational device designed to produce more effective learning,
- iv. If the curriculum therefore, is to make use of the concept of interest, it will be largely concerned with what is in learner’s interests, that is, what is valuable for them to learn. This again will be primarily the task of educators and teachers who have to take decisions about the content of education (Okeke, 2003).

II. OBJECTIVES OF NIGERIA’S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

In the objectives of Nigeria’s Philosophy of Education, we set goals for education bearing in mind our social needs. Like in philosophy, we also clarify issues and problems in philosophy of education. Therefore, in philosophy of education, we study the nature of man to see why he should be educated and how best he can be educated. This is metaphysics and education. We examine the nature of knowledge and what knowledge can be judged as best in education. This is Epistemology and education. We also study the value that education has and in what ways education can be pursued to promote the values which we have as a people. This is called Ethics (Denga, 1986).

Nigeria’s Philosophy of education exposes the teacher to the basic constructs that go into the nature of man, the society, his culture and curriculum experiences that will be appropriate to them. Through the philosophy of education, educational enterprises are made integrative. Thus, the interdisciplinary natures of the forms of knowledge and curriculum offerings are conceptualized. For example, educational technology, science education, and special education, have organic relationship with philosophy of education. Philosophy of education helps to provide the rational basis for each of these curriculum categories. For example, what is the philosophy of technical education, and how could the philosophy be attained?

According to Bamisaiye (1989):

It is the job of the teacher to know the basic structuring ideas and procedures in the various established disciplines and to ensure that they are grasped by the learner. It would, therefore, be an important teaching task to decide what are the structured modes of thinking that learners, at different ages, should be introduced to, and what the

essential features are of those modes of thinking. Such reflective and analytical thinking is essentially philosophical.

By implication, philosophy of education helps the teacher see problems and issues in their broader and clearer perspectives. The nature of children and how they learn fall within the purview of philosophy of education. The knowledge helps the teacher examine basic assumptions and theories with a view to clarifying them and identifying possible inconsistencies for possible resolution.

Educational philosophy deals with such important issues as the purpose of education, conduct of schools, and what constitutes academic freedom. Teachers should be equipped with the capacity to tackle these issues meaningfully.

Teachers through knowledge of philosophy of education, are enabled to find out how educators, both past and present, have tackled educational problems of their times: what systems of thought they developed that have helped to provide answers to the present day's educational equations. For example, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Dewey, among others, developed some systems of thought which have relevance to education. The teacher requires such knowledge to be able to handle the complexities of modern living. As Okeke (2003) puts it:

... it increases the abilities of educators to handle the complexities of living, and to enlarge their consciousness in the contact of those cross-currents of learning and events which have been the basis in determining the movements, changes and orientations in educational and other areas of endeavours.

Therefore, in Nigeria, both teachers and learners are, hopefully, better informed as to the rationale for making a course on 'philosophy of education' an important area of study in any worthwhile educational preparation programme. It is very necessary that every Nigerian professional teacher, both practicing and budding, develops deeper interest in and shows more concern for this all important curriculum offering - philosophy of Education.

III. TENETS OF NIGERIA'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The Philosophy of Nigerian Education as stipulated in Section One National Policy on Education says:

- (i) Since a national policy on education is the Government's way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be achieved using education as a tool, no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the Nation (Bamisaie, 1989).

The five main national objectives of Nigeria as stated in the Second National Development Plan, and endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of:

- a. A free and democratic society;
 - b. A just and egalitarian society;
 - c. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
 - d. A great and dynamic economy;
 - e. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.
- (ii) 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 (Ujowundu, 2008).
 - (iii) In consequence, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:
 - a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
 - b. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
 - c. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations;
 - d. Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
 - e. Respect for the dignity of labour; and
 - f. Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.
 - (iv) For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national objectives, it has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.
 - (v) The national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are therefore:
 - a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
 - b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
 - c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
 - d. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physically as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.
 - (vi) The desire that Nigeria should be a free, just and democratic society, a land full of opportunities for all its citizens, able to generate a great and dynamic economy and growing into a united, strong and self-reliant nation cannot be over-emphasized. In order to realize fully the potential of the contributions of education to the achievement of the objectives, all other agencies will operate in concert with education to that end.

Furthermore, to foster the much needed unity of Nigeria, imbalances in inter-state and intra-state development have to be corrected. Not only is education the greatest force that can

be used to bring about redress, it is also the greatest investment that the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources (Ujowundu, 2008).

(vii). The government will take various measures to implement the policy accordingly:

- a. Education will continue to be highly rated in the national development plans, because education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.
- b. Lifelong education will be the basis for the Nation's educational policies;
- c. Educational and training facilities will be multiplied and made more accessible, to afford the individual a far more diversified and flexible choice;
- d. Educational activity will be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment;
- e. Universal basic education, in a variety of forms, depending on needs and possibilities, will be provided for all citizens;
- f. Efforts will be made to relate education to overall community needs;
- g. Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual;
- h. Modern educational techniques will be increasingly used and improved at all levels of the education system;
- i. The education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning;
- j. At any stage of the educational process after primary education, an individual will be able to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with

study, or embarking on full time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on;

- k. Opportunity will continue to be made available for religious instruction. No child will be forced to accept any religious instruction which is contrary to the wishes of his parents; and
- l. Physical education will be emphasized at all Levels of the education system. (Ujowundu, 2008)

IV. CONCLUSION

The examination of certain aspects of the Nigerian educational system against the background of the concepts of 'education' and 'needs and interest', and the analysis of arguments associated with them have served to illustrate the importance of analytic techniques in the philosophy of education. Terms must be clearly defined, arguments closely analyzed and factual statements separated from evaluative statements before any serious consideration of educational claims and judgments can take place. Educational discourse cannot proceed until ambiguity and imprecision have been eradicated. Philosophical analysis is thus, a principal weapon in the armoury of the philosopher of education and its application can be of enduring assistance to education students, teachers, professional educators and administrators.

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