

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND ADULT EDUCATION IS APPROPRIATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Augustine Gesikeme Tantbou

Abstract

Existentialist school of thought postulates that the totality of any educational endeavour should be to liberate the creative potential, that is, to bring about an understanding of the process of change by the group which is experiencing that process; thus enabling the group to redefine and to deepen the scope of their action together. This paper explores and argues that the target of adult education is to help break down parochial interests and loyalties thereby leading to an integrated and united polity essential for the effective functioning of a democratic state. This paper also examined thoroughly the meaning and concept of existentialist philosophy and adult education; and concludes by drawing the relationship that could lead to national development.

Introduction

In the original and widest sense philosophy is the love, study, or pursuit of wisdom, or of knowledge of things and their causes, whether theoretical or practical. It could also be defined as the study of the general principles of some particular branch of knowledge, experience, or activity, also less properly, of those of any subject of phenomenon. Philosophy could also be seen as the system . which a person forms for the conduct of life, the mental attitude or habit of a philosopher; calmness of temper. It could also mean a particular system of ideas relating to the general scheme of the universe. Significantly, philosophy dwells at the point where meaning is involved. It is not content with what is . already there. Remarkably, the feature of philosophy is its effort to evaluate the sum total of human experience. Unlike any of the specific sciences, philosophy adds no new facts. It examines the facts provided by the scientist and analyses the meaning interpretation, significance, and the value these facts hold for life.

Given the above definition of philosophy. This paper has therefore, examined thoroughly the meaning and concept of existentialist philosophy and adult education; and concludes by drawing the relationship that could lead to national development.

Adult Education

The concept adult" is among the most problematic in the field of education. It tends to be used to refer to liberal education for adults in United Kingdom, whereas in the United States, for example, it has the wider connotation of the education of adults, whether it is vocational or otherwise.

For more comprehensive approach to the concept adult education, UNESCO (1976), see it as:

The entire body of organized education processes, whatever the contents, level, or method, whether formal or otherwise, whether prolonged or replace initial education in schools or colleges, and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or qualifications, or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced, independent, social, economic, and cultural development.

. In Eire, the Murphy Committee defined adult education as "the provision and utilization of facilities whereby those who are no longer participants in the full time school system may learn whatever they need to learn at any period of their lives" In Dutch law, it is defined as "the promotion of one's personal development and function in society through extension of knowledge, insight and attitude, as well as social, cultural, and technical skills".

In his contribution to the definition of adult education which is apportions to this discourse, Nzeneri (2008), saw adult education as a process and agent of liberation, a tool for adjustment, for self and national development, for cultural awareness and integration, for concretization and group dynamism. Any education given to adult based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society'.

Din, analyzing the concept of adult education, it is appropriate to forge out for ourselves the criteria which adult education must satisfy. From the above definition, some salient criteria can be

deduced. There are:

One, the activity must be educational in nature, that is, it must not be for mere recreation or entertainment.

Two, the activity must be relatively organized and planned, not just random or causal.

Three, it must be a purposeful activity, intentional, deliberate and directed toward identified interests or needs of recipients.

Four, it must have adults as its target clientele, the adult being defined in terms of social responsibility, mental maturity, moral and personality balance.

Five, it is normally (though not always) part time, that is, supplemental to the adult's other full-time engagement. Six, it is needs-oriented and needs determined, as well as problem-solving.

Seven, it is usually situationally relevant, dealing with matters that are of immediate concern—that is, it is an education preparing for some distant usefulness. It is useful here and now.

And last but not the least criteria, it must be learner-centred, involving the learner in all the learning processes, with the ultimate aim of making his learning self-initiated and self-directed.

Having gone thus far, it will not be out of place if the importance of adult education is enumerated as it concerns the individual, society and the public at large. Adult education is particularly useful in creating a sense of self-awareness, self-confidence and self-reliance in the individual person exposed to it. It stimulates his cognitive awareness, thus opening up for him more extensive source of information and greater capacity for coping with the enlarged information. It can lead to higher income for the individual and greater capacity for economic improvement thereby removing such individual or group from the shackles of poverty, which is a cardinal target of the millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It also increases the individual's capacity for political and social participation. It changes the attitudes of those exposed to it, curing them of their inferiority complex, giving them confidence, filling them with desire for more and more educational facilities. It never leaves the persons the same as he was before the intervention. For the society, adult education can help to break down parochial interests and loyalties, thereby leading to an integrated and united polity. An effective rural adult education programme removes entirely from rural dwellers fatalistic and pessimistic tendencies thereby, increasing the chances of local initiatives towards self-help projects.

Adult education is most essential for the effective functioning of a democratic state. Adult education also ensures a nation's economic development since it is the adults that presently contribute to the wealth of the nation. It is a *sine qua non* for a democratic government.

Existentialist Philosophy

Existentialism is a philosophy movement that developed on the continent of Europe during the 1800's and 1900's. The movement is called existentialism because most of its members are primarily interested in the nature of existence or being-human existences. It is concerned with the earthly existence of man; it deals with issues such as individual problems, the understanding of the human predicaments and the process through which such problems could be ameliorated. How man can find meaning to life and live within this absurd and irrational world. (Brooke and Kenneth 2002). Existentialism is considered as a direct reaction to perceived social ills.

Existentialism grew out of the work of two thinkers of the 1800's Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and Protestant theologian, who is generally considered the founder of the movement, and Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher. The most prominent existentialist thinkers of the 1900's include the French writers Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, and Gabriel German, philosophers Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger.

Existentialism is largely a revolt against traditional European philosophy, which reached its climax in the impressive system of the German philosophers, Immanuel Kant and George Friedrich Hegel. Traditional philosophers tended to consider philosophy as science. They tried to produce principles of knowledge that would be objective, universally true, and certain. The existentialists argue that objective, universal, and certain knowledge is an unattained ideal. The traditional philosophers stress that every individual, even the philosopher or scientist seeking absolute knowledge, is only limited human being.

For the existentialist, this problem lies at the heart of the human condition. They see human life as being basically series of decisions that must be made with no way of knowing conclusively what the correct choices are. The individual therefore, must decide which standards to accept and which ones to reject. The existentialists conclude, therefore, that because individuals make their own choices they are free, but because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices they are free, but

because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choice, no matter how difficult. The existentialist system of philosophy of education is the newest to appear upon the intellectual scene. The major purpose of education to the Existentialist philosophers is to serve the individual human being, to develop individual awareness, to provide opportunity for free ethical choices, to encourage the development of self-knowledge, to develop a sense of individual commitment. The existential philosophers advocate education that treats man as end in itself, and not as a means to other ends. One of the greatest advocates of the existentialist view, Soren Kierkegaard wrote in the 18th century about "The present Age" thus:

It is an age that exalted man in the mass but belittled to be individual in the modern life man is lost in the crowd and is not at loss when not in the crowd.

It is the view of the existentialists that in a situation where the individual is subsumed in the world and is less emphasized, there is going to be the inevitable consequence of alienation of individuals. This leads the existentialists to emphasize individual centered programmes that call for effective positive change. Hence the curriculum should be that which will cause the individual to mobilize and direct all available strengths the resources towards ones chose life endeavour. The curriculum should not be subject-centered. Whatever is studied must be to develop the person's self-knowledge and self-responsibility. There the ideal curriculum for the Existentialist stresses:

- an activity curriculum.
- Pupil interest as the basis of planning and activity.
- Complete freedom for the pupil to work in groups or alone.
- A curriculum based on the immediate needs.

The existentialist expects adult education to take cognizance of the individual as and end itself and that all education philosophies must focus on the individual in his or her confrontation with the world. They expect adult education programme not only to generate change within the individual but to equip the individual to effect change in the society. The adult education programme is expected to evolve an attitude in the individual whereby he shall come to recognize himself as an effective human being capable of initiating and taking advantage of opportunities.

The existentialists are of the view that all educational endeavors should liberate people through a process of dialogue and concretization. And that emphasis should be placed on the individual will and need to make choices in the face of doubt and uncertainty. They can help adult name the world and acquire critical awareness of their sometimes oppressed environment, which can lead them to take action to transform it. Accordingly, Daley (n.d), concluded that the existentialist aim and purpose for education is to guide the individual into an awareness of his condition and to promote his successful commitment to a significant and meaningful existences. Specifically the existentialist's goals include:

- To develop individual awareness.
- To provide opportunity for free, ethical choices.
- To encourage the development of self-knowledge.
- To develop a sense of self-responsibility.

The Relationship Between Adult Education and Existentialism School of Thought

Adult education is primarily geared towards creating in the individual a sense of self-awareness, self-confidence and self-reliance. These scholars of this school advocate education that treats man as end in itself, and not as a means to other ends.

One other goal of adult education programme is to generate change within the individual, to the existentialism proponents this change within the individual should equip him to effect change in the society. The existentialism philosophy is of the view that the oppressed man should be allowed to liberate themselves and become more fully human. Adult education as it is, is an endeavour which liberates through a process of dialogue and conscientisation, making the participants to acquire critical awareness of their oppressive environment, thereby leading them to take appropriate action to transform it.

Furthermore, the existentialist school of thought is of the view that the totality of any educational endeavour should be to liberate the creative potential i.e to bring about an understanding of the process of change by the group which is experiencing that process; thus enabling the group to redefine

and to deepen the scope of their action together. So also is the target of adult education which is focused to help break down parochial interests and loyalties, thereby leading to the integrated and united polity. Adult education is most essential for the effective functioning of a democratic state.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The appropriateness of existentialism philosophy and adult education for national development can not of overphasized, since it is a truism to say that the underlying principles for any national development is predicated upon sound philosophical premise and qualitative education as evidenced in developed countries. Accordingly, Awolokokun, as quoted by Amina (2007), defined national development as:

A minimum social and political development as well as economic development in the building of national identity. It could also be viewed in terms of growth and changes that occurred in a given political entity over a time. These changes could probably be in attitudes and values. Hence, Nation development goals could be seen in terms of progressive reduction and eventual elimination of squalor, unemployment and inequalities. National development as used here would be geared towards the improvement of adult illiterate populace through adult education.

Besides the above, the crucial role adult education is expected to play in national development is succinctly captured thus by the Nigerian national Policy on education as:

- To provide functional literacy education for the adult who have never had the advantage of any formal education.
- To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system;
- To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their knowledge and skills.
- To provide in-service, on the job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- To given the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment (federal Republic of Nigeria 1981: 32).

It is pertinent to note that adult education aims at improving and developing the individual to becoming a sound and effective citizen. More so, the philosophy of adult education can liberate the individual from wrongly held prejudices and fully integrate such one into the community.

Therefore, existentialist philosophy and adult education becomes appropriate for national development:

1. It is based on the premises that " each person constructs his own social reality. The problem therefore, becomes not to understand a given reality by the methods of natural sciences, but to elucidate the social system as an outcome of what people already understand".
2. It expects adult education to take cognizance of the individual as an end in itself.
3. That "the purpose of all social, economic and political activity must be man".
4. That " people cannot be development, they can only develop themselves".
5. That whatsoever educational endeavour should be programmed in a way that it should lead to a positive change, change that will enable the individual conquer his environment thereby changing the world.

Conclusive, if the World's Government blueprint for building better world in 21st century is anything go by then the existential philosophy and adult education should be given a greater concern by individuals, community development agencies, institutions of learning, local governments, states and national governments alike.

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