

**ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN CURBING THE  
CHALLENGES OF THE NIGERIAN TEACHER AS A MEANS OF  
REGENERATING EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

The general decline in the standard of performance of students in the various subjects has always been attributed to a number of factors, including poor conditions of service for the teachers, lack of seriousness on the part of both students and teachers. Most assessors have almost always missed one vital factor: "philosophy of education" an inseparable and instrumental component of any educational programme. This paper examines the role of philosophy of education in curbing the challenges of the Nigerian teacher as a means of regenerating education for self-reliance and national development; Attempts have been made to clarify certain concepts like philosophy, education teachers and also X-rays the challenges of the profession. It went further to highlight the role philosophy of education play in curbing the challenges of the Nigerian teacher. It finally brought out recommendations such as professionals in the field of philosophy of education should teach the subject other than mediocres, re-organization and restructuring of philosophy of education association and other means of regenerating education for self-reliance and national development.

Education is a human development process. Every society designs the types of citizen it wants to produce, using education as its instrument. To achieve this, the teacher's multi-dimensional responsibilities are required. In other words, It takes a well educated teacher to adequately implement

the philosophy of any nation via its education. Philosophy of education, over the years has been a core subject in the curriculum of teacher education programme at the certificate, diploma and degree levels. Hence, the relevance of philosophy of education in producing quality and responsive teachers, who would in turn produce reliable, dependable and well integrated citizens, cannot be under-estimated.

The Nigerian teacher is passing through a lot of challenges bothering on cross discipline among the students, dearth of teaching and learning facilities, acute shortage expected to play the role of foster parents, administrators, counselor and others. The more these challenge the more the need for sound inculcation of the knowledge of philosophy of education in all teacher education programme.

#### **Clarification of Concepts** **Philosophy as a concept**

The term philosophy originated, from two Greek words philo and Sophia meaning love and wisdom respectively, which is translated to "love of knowledge". Philosophy therefore concerns itself with the process of knowing, for he who love wisdom would always reflect on his purpose and actions by asking questions and attempting answers to them. Socrates was then right, stating that an unexamined life is worthless and dangerous.

No doubt, then, most scholars perceives philosophy as an attitude towards life, and as love of wisdom it

makes life become more intelligent, meaningful and purposeful. It achieves this by clarifying, justifying and verifying issues, through criticism of concepts and principles. Hence, philosophy distinguishes reason from evidence of things gives purposeful directions to life.

There are many others, who perceive philosophy as a mere series of endless argument and refutations of people's opinions. However, philosophy rather than being mere endless arguments and refutations is a rational reflection on things that exist, their attributes and implications in their simplest forms.

Philosophy could further be seen as a mode of thinking activity created. It is reflected on all branches of human life. Hence, philosophy is the science of other sciences. It is a search into the realities and existence of man, the universe, knowledge and essence. Philosophy is a vision, an outlook and attitude on life.

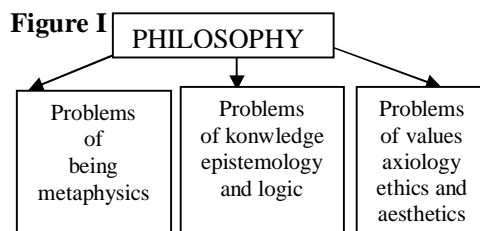
Ezenwu (1993) and Amaele (2005) respectively argued that philosophy is usually conceived as a rational investigation of certain fundamentals problems about the nature of man the world he lives. The word rational, however, indicates that in our attempts to find answers to such fundamental questions of philosophy, conclusions reached, as answers to the fundamental questions, must have been reached through systematic and logical method of doing so. This the aspect or branch of philosophy known as logic which forms a major arm

of epistemology. Philosophy, however, is not only limited to rational investigation of certain fundamental problems of man and the universe.

The task of philosophy is not limited to “asking and answer basic or fundamental question about life, knowledge and values”. But it also attempts to understand ultimate being, ultimate reality, the end product of life, the meaning and purpose of life. It applies reason as its main tool to arrive at conclusion, since philosophical problems cannot be subjected to laboratory and empirical investigations. It tries to rid the mind of bias, prejudice and preconceived ideas, by emphasizing rationality and logical presentation of reasons in support of value judgment.

Philosophy, according to Ocho (1988) and Amaele (2005) deals with three major problems of life.

1. Problem of being (Ontology). Who am I? (This is related to the metaphysical branch of philosophy).
2. Problems of knowledge (epistemology). How can we know that we know?
3. Problems of value (Axiology). What is good? What is beauty? When is something valuable? Is it better to study arts or science? Should a teacher use corporal punishment?



### Major branches of philosophy

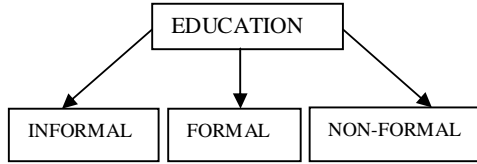
Philosophy gives meaning and coherence to all branches of knowledge. It provides an overall picture of life and charts the course and end of other branches of study by trying to give meaning to data collected from different disciplines and this way tries to establish standards, or norms or goals. Philosophy, therefore, establishes guideline, aims and standard for the present and future, by critically examining the past. Hence, it lays emphasis on objective rather than subjective evidence, since it rules out bias and prejudice. It also oppose to narrowness of outlook.

### The Concept of Education

It can take volumes of books to define the concept “education” without coming to a consensus. The reason is that there as many definitions to educations as there are many who think about it. Education can be defined from the informal, formal and non-formal points of views. From the informal sense, education becomes a conscious or unconscious transmission of knowledge, skills morals ( culture) from one generation to another. This can be acquired anytime, by anybody. Formally, education could be a conscious and systematic attempt made by the society (through the organized institutions) to teach skills, knowledge, values of the society to the child to enable him become better and function well in the society. It has duration, curriculum, specified teachers, and environment. Education can also be received from the non-formal

sense, where mini-formal orientations are applied.

**Figure II**



The Three Modal Forms of Education

Education can be also be perceived differently according to the diverse orientation of the educators or educationist. For instance, the sociologist might perceive education as a process of socialization or acculturation, while the humanist could perceive it as a process of self-development, self realization or actualization.

The understanding of the nature and purpose of man, as well as the qualities of leadership can also affect or influence the theories and practice of education in the society. This therefore, creates diverse views on education from time to time. Hence, education could be said to be a dynamic process. This position may not be far from the argument of Okeke (1989:18) that:

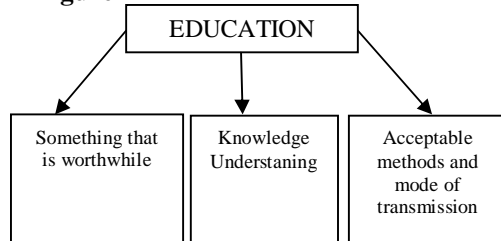
Education is susceptible to time, place and circumstances, hence its dynamic posture. It is subject to changes at various times from place to place since different societies have their value orientations, and depending on circumstances, since our desires,

attitude, goals are ever changing relative to the existing demands.

It is, however, necessary to state that the more attention and meaning given to education in the society, the greater and higher the quality of life becomes. There are certain things people or some societies give or do in pretence of providing education which falls short of the standard criteria for education. It is necessary at this point to state some criteria put forward by great educationist like Peters (1966), Akinpelu (1981) and Amaele [2005) which qualifies a process to be education. Peter's criteria for education implies that:

1. **Education implies that transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it.**
2. **Education must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective which are not inert.**
3. Education at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack wittingness and voluntariness on the learner.

**Figure III**



Coined from Peter's criteria for education

Akinpelu contends that for a process to qualify as education, it must involve:

- i. A conscious effort to bring about a desirable change;
- ii. A change that is intentional, deliberate and purposeful;
- iii. Knowledge and understanding; and
- iv. A method of transmission that is normally accepted.

Some of the implications of Peter's and Akinpelu criteria above are that education is not a mere transmission of disjointed information. What must be passed on to the learner, in terms of skills, knowledge and values must be viewed and approved to be worthwhile to the society which includes those transmitting it and those receiving it. Again education must involve the full and active participation of the learner leading to knowledge and understanding, as well as, the development of critical thinking. It should make the learner to develop the right sense of judgment and to accept **the** responsibility of his actions,

Education also must follow acceptable procedures, rules or methods which allow the learner to exercise his willingness to participate. The learner should also be given a level of freedom to choose from the varied range of knowledge and skills, according to needs, ability and capacity. This could be

possible if comprehensive education, quality and adequate manpower, **enabling teaching and learning environment facilities. adequate funding are provide at all levels.**

The primary aim of education is to help each human person to realize to the fullest his potentials and grow into a person to the extent of which he is capable. Education must guarantee that people must be treated as persons and that their needs be commensurately met in spite of their social wants and needs.

The system of education in any society worth it gives level ground opportunities for all to participate freely in a living and shared experiences of life with other persons, them to express their creative spirit, furnish them with the values of truth, knowledge, beauty and goodness.

### **The Concept of Philosophy of Education**

Some interpretations have been given to the concept of philosophy of education. By various scholars over the ages. One of the foremost scholars in these interpretations Schuffler (1972). He put forward five different possible interpretations of philosophy of education. These positions are summarized by Nweke (1989) that:

1. Philosophy of education refers to the principles of education which is followed and applied by educationists and educators.
2. Philosophy of education can also be perceived to be the history of

educational ideas, implying that the conceptual ideas of great educators/philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Dewey are made relevant to modern problems of education.

3. Philosophy of education is strictly problems of philosophy a drawn out and attempts are made to let them have their relevance to education.
4. Philosophy of education is the ideals of society on education. Hence, policies of education evolve and are formulated to pursue both theoretical and practical issues toward attainment of educational objectives.
5. Philosophy of education is the application of some fundamental basic principles of philosophy to the problems of education.

The various interpretations above are possible reflections basic principles of philosophy of education is at one point or the other. In some schools or institutions, all the five points are reflected in the curriculum of philosophy of education, while in some emphasis is laid on the first, second and fifth interpretations. But for this study, the focus will be on the fifth interpretation.

Philosophy of education can be said to mean the application of some Fundamental and basic principles of

philosophy in clarifying, studying, verifying, Justifying and or solving problems in education. Philosophy of education generates an outlook, an attitude to the theories and practices of education and makes education intelligent, meaningful and purposeful. It gives guide to what kind of life one should lead and what kind of action should be taken. It establishes standards and formulates goals for purposeful living. Philosophy of education draws from the wealth of its vast branches (metaphysics, epistemology and axiology) in attempting and seeking solution to educational problems. In achieving this task; it surveys the past, looks into the future and helps to establish guidelines, norms, aims and standards.

Philosophy of education therefore, is a coherent set of values and fundamental assumptions used as guides for evaluating and guiding educational practices, This approach to philosophy of education is similar to that of Ocho (1988) which states that: "philosophy of education is the application of philosophical principles to educational issues and problems".

In other words, philosophy of education tries to illuminate educational practice through the analysis of meanings and in this way helps teachers to take wider educational perspective of day today educational problems.

### **The Teacher and the Challenges of the Profession**

A teacher, according to Nwagbara (2002) must have relevant skills,

knowledge and competencies required, in a relevant training, in a well established teachers' college or institution. As a human resource development, the teacher should also undergo regular orientation and or on the job training causes to update the knowledge in line with current issues. Nwagbara assert that the two major areas of concern in teacher's performance appraisal are teacher's personal characteristics and teacher's performance effectiveness.

Similarly, Adeyinka (1985) identifies a teacher as a man of two worlds, belonging to two closely related professions: an educator and a subject specialist. As a subject specialist the teacher should have genuine professional interest in the learning and teaching of his subject. As an educator, he should be conversant with the skill of teaching his subject, making abundant but relevant use of instructional aids. In other words, a teacher could be described as that person who imparts knowledge and transmits the societal values. He is a socializer, a role model, a pacesetter, a director of learning and instruction, as well as an evaluator.

The success or failure of achieving the goals and aim of sound education for any nation depends on quality and the caliber of teachers who are the interpreters and transmitters of desirable attitudes, skills, knowledge and values in that society.

Essien (1975) was then justified, arguing that 'the weakest link

in our educational set up is the very poor quality of the type of preparation to which our teachers are exposed. He further argued that if we sincerely want to get on as virile and dynamic nation, there is no other alternative than to make the teaching profession attractive and sufficiently competitive to attract the best and thereby raise the image of the teacher.

It is, indeed, a fair argument to state that for effective actualization of the nation's education dream; those who teach must be professionally trained as teachers. The person who has got the teaching aptitude and who has undergone a period of professional training is the competent person to teach in our classrooms. A teacher is a man of many parts. He combines love of knowledge with ability to impregnate others with his knowledge.

The teacher has the disciplinary role, surrogate role and also the role models. The first two deals with the teachers' competence in character, academic and pedagogical training of the child within the societal approval in the surrogate role. For instance, the teacher takes the role of parents in the school. The teacher in the last category of role is a model worth imitating by the pupils. The teacher therefore, has the task of influencing the students under his charge who in turn influence the entire society where they live in.

**The roles of a teacher are those tasks or duties a teacher undertakes in**

the training and generally in educating other persons, the educands and learners. In any formal human learning situation, a teacher is indispensable. His roles are multiple and highly demanding.

#### **Teacher's Role as a Classroom Manager**

A teacher is expected to guide the actions and thoughts of the learners. In performing this task, the teacher assumes the role of manager of resources. He sets objectives (instructional and behavioural) to achieve in his daily classroom lessons. Part of the teacher's roles as a manager, is to motivate, direct, coordinate and control learners and their activities. He keeps adequate record of individual pupils to assess his/her progress. He acts as a judge in evaluating progress reports of these students. The teacher also keeps discipline in his class and in the schools as a whole.

#### **Teacher's Role in the School System**

The role of a teacher is both administrative and professional in the school. As an administrative officer, a teacher participates in taking decisions and initiating actions, organizing the available resources for judicious and effective utilization, coordinating and communicating in the school, He helps in managing the school physical facilities, as a professional, he participates in curriculum development and translation of such curriculum into effective actions.

#### **Teachers' Role in Satisfying Children**

The teacher has the responsibility of seeing that the children are able to satisfy their important needs which

involves the general knowledge of the common needs and interests of all children and the ability to recognize the specific needs and to interpret the behaviour of each student which will enable the child to be self-reliant

#### **Teacher's Role in Maintaining Good Personal Relation**

The teacher's role in manipulating the conditions of the school is the cultivation of a state of good personal relationship between all the members on the school community. He also maintains high cordial relationship between him and the parent of his pupils and sustains good relationships between the school and the home for positive development of the child. This will enable the child develop and understand the spirit of inter-dependence to facilitate him or her grow in order to be self-reliant

#### **The Therapeutic Role**

Performance of the therapeutic role involves the teacher in coping with and helping children overcome their problems. An ability to observe and study children, identify their talents and problems is an important tool in the hands of the teacher. It also involves not only skillful coping with undesirable problems but use of various principles to change undesirable attitude and behavior for self-reliant and meaningful development.

#### **The Role of Philosophy of Education in Curbing the Challenges of the Nigerian Teacher as a Means of Regenerating Education for Self-Reliance and National Development**



The National Policy on Education in its wisdom states that the overall philosophy of Nigeria is to:

- a) Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equity and justice.
- b) Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

The above two cardinal goals inform the Nigeria's philosophy of education, which according to the document, is based on:

- a) The development of the individuals into a sound and effective citizen.
- b) The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

Interestingly, the National Policy on Education identified the teacher as a cardinal factor in realizing both the national philosophy and the philosophy of education so stated. It admitted that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. It did not only lay emphasis on quality of teachers but also on quantity. Hence, it states that the goal of teacher education in Nigeria shall be to:

- a. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;

- b. Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- d. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to the changing situations;
- e. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The task of the teacher as discussed in the last sub-heading of this paper is so multi-dimensional and challenging.

Those challenges notwithstanding, the contemporary experiences in schools where examination malpractice, sorting, sexual abuse, drug abuse, corruption and general indiscipline, among students and staff are on daily increase appears to have compounded the situation.

Furtherance to that is the government uncompromising attitude to the hindering factors to quality education such as inadequate funding, understanding, poor teaching and learning facilities and so many others, in our schools. However, at the centre of all these crises is the teacher, who is trained to achieve the national philosophy using the instrument of education. Hence to achieve this the teacher himself should be adequately armed with the rudiments of philosophy of education.

Knowledge of philosophy of education is also important to the Nigerian

teacher as it guides him to clarify some educational concepts and issues which in most cases appear to have been clouded with ambiguities, thus, making achievements difficult. Such philosophical concepts as teaching, learning, discipline, freedom, authority, equality, quality, as well as issues such as free education, education for all, and others, which are freely used in Nigeria without positive results need clarification. This can only be made relevant by sound knowledge of philosophy of education. The teacher must understand the meaning of concepts and issues related to his field before he performs better.

Philosophy examined critically the issues of values and morality in education. Philosophy of education in this regard helps the teacher to be self controlled so as to control the vices which students import into the school system from the macro society.

Knowledge of philosophy of education can also help the Nigerian teacher to advise the government and other stakeholders of the school system on better ways to improve the nation's education system.

Philosophy of education is still relevant to the Nigerian teacher as it equips the teacher with sound philosophical thoughts of great world philosophers. These philosophies will enable the teacher to adequately manage his present classroom and school situations.

Philosophy of education helps the Nigerian teacher to cope with other higher responsibilities within and outside the school system nationally or internationally.

Through the use of sound philosophical reasoning and logic, the Nigerian teacher could become more productive and also reduce wastages within and outside the schools system.

Philosophy of education is very crucial, especially to the present day Nigerian teacher as it equips him to understand better and appreciate the general philosophy of the country so as to balance such objectives with the policies and programmes of education in the country to attain the desired target of the nation.

### **Conclusion**

It is a fact that every nation has its own level of understanding of national philosophy which informs its philosophy of education. The philosophy of education in such society is expected to be implemented by the teacher.

For the teacher to effectively and efficiently carry out the task so expected of him in the society, sound knowledge of philosophy of education is absolutely necessary. Philosophy of education therefore, is still relevant to any nation, more so to Nigeria, as long as quality education is demanded.

### **Recommendations**

The place of philosophy of education in assisting the Nigerian

teacher to efficiently cope with the daily challenges cannot be overemphasized. Hence, this paper recommends the following:

Philosophy of education, should not only be made compulsory in all teacher education programmes, but that the contact of course of study should be expanded to cover in details the metaphysical, epistemological and axiological realities of the individual and the society. This cannot be achieved in just one. Semester course as it is most commonly taught today.

The teaching and assessment of students in the field of philosophy of education at any level should only be contracted to professionally trained philosophers of education. The present trend where mediocre are forced to teach a core subject like philosophy of education should be discouraged.

Institutions and organizations that employ the services of trained philosophers of education should encourage and sponsor them to attend and participate in the annual national conferences of the Philosophy of Education Association of Nigeria.

The National Conference of Philosophers of Education in Nigeria should be reorganized and strengthened to attract the attention and interest of the major stakeholders of education in Nigeria, and finally, the Philosophy of Education Association of Nigeria should go into affiliation with its likes that the

international communities and its journals should cut across the continents of the world.

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