

An Analysis of the Philosophical Nexus of Educational Theory and Praxis

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Abstract: This Paper sought to examine selected Philosophical antecedents of Educational Theory and Praxis. Philosophical Analysis Method (PAM) was used to attempt precise answers to three specific questions: First, What are the Philosophical antecedents of Normative, Cognitive, Creative and Dialogical aims of Education? Secondly, Are there any Metaphysical, Axiological, Epistemological and Logical and basis for curriculum content? Lastly, Can teaching methods be elucidated Philosophically? Key inferences ascertain that indeed there is a way in which we can consider education as a philosophical activity given that Education and Philosophy are closely related activities. The symbiotic relationship between Philosophy and Education is such that Education derives its form from Philosophy's branches of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic and Axiology while Philosophy receives its matter from Educational Praxis.

Keywords: Philosophy, Education, Curriculum, Aims of Education, Educational Methods.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The term 'Philosophy' comes from an amalgam of two Greek words-*Philos* and *Sophia* which mean 'Love' and 'Wisdom' respectively (Mattei, 1994). Philosophy, therefore, is the love for wisdom, and a Philosopher is a Lover of wisdom. From the definition of philosophy as Love of wisdom, we can infer that Philosophy combines both emotional(Love) and cognitive (Wisdom) dimensions of the human soul. Love, in this case, is a craving to attain the object of that which is being loved; in this case, *Sophia* or wisdom. In a deeper connotation Love of wisdom is also a constant and condition-less commitment to wisdom itself. Wisdom on its part can be considered generally as 'the ability to live a meaningful life by making the right choices' or Philosophically, as "the enduring pursuit of Truth" (Cronin, 2005). As such Philosophy in the strict sense is an active pursuit of truth. This pursuit has some level of restlessness and scepticism. Philosophical Scepticism impels the philosopher to question things that are both immanent and transcendent, and the familiar and the lofty. In agreement with Socrates of Athens who once remarked, "As for me, all I know is that I know nothing" (Socrates, as cited in Ochieng - Odhiambo, 2009, p.80), the philosopher sees himself not as a wise human being but as a human being in love with Truth.

The world of Philosophy can be divided into General Philosophy and Technical Philosophy (Akinpelu, 1988).

General Philosophy refers to philosophy traced back to the emergence of man into the plane of history. It is premised on the fact that humans are natural thinkers and therefore a constant seeker of Truth; in its simplicity and its loftiness. General Philosophy also has the connotation of customs, traditions, institutional guiding principles or even personal stance on life. Technical Philosophy is an individuation of the broader, universal, general philosophy. It is characterised by formalisation, westernisation and specialisation (Njoroge & Benaars, 1986, pp. 9-10), it is more rigorous than general Philosophy, more professional and more Scholastic. Technical philosophy can also be divided into Metaphysics, Epistemology Logic and Ethics (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009).

On its part, the term education comes from the Latin noun *Education*, which is a derivative of the verb *Educare* (pronounced *Eh duh kareh*); it means 'to bring up', or "to nurture" the young ones. Education then is the holistic nurturing of the learner cognitively, normatively, creatively and dialogically (Njoroge & Benaars, 1986). The process of nurturing requires rigorous thought and exposure on the part of the teacher and the learner both formally and informally. Discussions on Education involves discussions on Educational aims, Curriculum content and Teaching Methods.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Education is a complex entity. It encompasses several pre-meditated, actual and evaluative processes. Its complexity and its open traits attract intrusions from external forces like politics, religion, economy and even social whims which, if not sieved can lead to unwanted effects such as *Miseducation*. The sieving of Education requires the Philosophical process of questioning. If the sieving and sifting of Education are to be productive, Education must be intrinsically wired to Philosophy, yet this connection is not automatically defined. It is because of this uncertainty that this paper purposes to examine some Philosophical antecedents of Educational Theory and Praxis.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the Philosophical antecedents of Normative, Cognitive, Creative and Dialogical aims of Education.
- ii. To examine the Metaphysical, Axiological, Epistemological and Logical and bases for curriculum content.

- iii. To philosophically elucidate Expository and Heuristic teaching approaches.

1.4 Method of investigation

Philosophical Analysis concerns itself with clarification of complex systems. Its central focus is the search for meanings and their implications. This method is used in this study to bring out the Philosophical tangent of Education.

II. AIMS OF EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

The aims of education accrue from the Philosophical intentions envisioned by a nation (Redden, 1942). These aims can be Normative, Cognitive, Creative or Dialogical (Njoroge & Benaars, 1986 and Ozmon, Howard, Craver & Samuell, 1995).

Normative aims: For any activity to be genuinely called Education, it must be a worthwhile activity. It must necessarily be a value-laden activity (Akinpelu, 1988) and consequently, Anti-social and immoral activities are outside the scope of education. The morality of Voluntary human actions is best determined by axiology because it sees the students as human beings and that if students are humans, then they are moral agents who can actuate their Moral potencies and consequently achieve virtue. Character formation, especially in its objectivity and universality squarely lies in the realm of Idealism and Deontological ethics (Odhiambo, 2009); as such the axiology of Idealism is very important in enhancing real normative education which ipso facto leads to an educated person, who is so-called because of morals and virtue.

Cognitive aims: Education also aims at fostering intelligence. Phenix (1961) observes that "The ultimate aim of education is often said to be rational understanding...or to gain knowledge"(p.562). This aim of education has its premises on Idealism, Realism and Analytic Philosophies. Realists believe that the world is rational, has extensive knowledge but this knowledge is accessible only to the human intellect. Accessibility of the Knowable to the human mind is possible because in the first place humans are *knowing* animals. Analytic Philosophy propounds that human beings have a great and powerful mental tool which can be used for the good of society depending on how they use language. They posit that logic and analysis of language should be used to clarify concepts and meanings of words to avoid misinterpretations which lead to emotional quagmires. It is no wonder some philosophers of Education argue that "Educators should attune themselves to the logical complexities of language...Education includes developing one's capacity to reason, justifying beliefs and conduct (Ozmon, Howard and Craver, Samuell, 1995)". The implication herein is that the cognitive aims of education are purposed to develop the cognitive dimension of the learner.

Creative aims of Education: Education should help people solve the problems they face in their daily lives. For

Pragmatic Educators, Education is an art that must be embraced by teachers at all times. They do so when they keeping Education from becoming routinised and lethargic" (Ozmon, Howard and Craver, Samuell, 1995, p. 146). It is the creative aspect that helps humans sustain themselves. Phenix (1961) observes that "...man's chief good is not to know but to do"(p.563). He appeals to the dynamic nature of man as a being that is creative and constructive. It then behoves education to fulfil the creative dimension of the human being. This aim has its roots in the philosophy of pragmatism of John Dewey and Philosophical, anthropological view of a human being as *Homo Faber*(the man that makes) (Mondin, 2016).

Dialogical aims: The last general aim of education we are tackling in this section has to do with the dialogical dimension of human being. Phenix calls it Education for Peace. Education should help society to create a condition that fosters harmony and coexistence." When peace is the ultimate aim (of education) the learner is encouraged to find some immediate satisfaction in whatever he does" (Phenix, 1961, p. 564). In this way, intrapersonal relationship and interpersonal interaction are enhanced. The aforesaid aim is based on Behaviourism and Existential philosophies. It is also pegged on Aristotelian dictate that Human beings are social animals(*zum politikon*) (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009).

III. TECHNICAL PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

3.1. Ethical Antecedent of Curriculum

As indicated earlier Ethics forms part of what we call in philosophy Axiology. It is derived from the Greek Term 'εθικη' transliterated as *Ethike* which means the study of *ethos* (εθος) (plural *oi ethoi*). The Latin equivalent is *mores*. It refers to the customs or habits of a 'people'. Ethics does not simply study Ethos as a historian studies history, but it extends to the scrutiny of both the immediate and the not so immediate aspects of human conduct. The intellectual rigour involved in the study of ethics, the appeal to ontology and epistemology, and the logic exhibited in it, squarely place Ethics into the domain of Philosophy. It is for this reason that ethics is defined as "...the philosophical study of morals..." (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009, p. 35).It carefully and critically studies human behaviour with the aim of attempting to "...determine right actions from wrong ones, good ones from bad ones, the ones we ought to do and those we ought not to do" (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009, p. 36). In most societies, Ethics informs moral education in subjects like Religious Studies, History, Ethics itself as a subject or ethics of sub-areas like business ethics. Furthermore , the informal and non-formal curriculum curriculum like School rules and regulations, Teachers codes of Regulation foster moral education.

3.2. Metaphysical antecedents of Educational Curriculum

Τα μετα τα Φυσικα (transliterated ta meta ta phusika) is Greek Phrase implying, that which comes after the natural. It

originally meant Aristotle's work that was written after his physics or scientific work. However, later on, it acquired the meaning of 'the ultimate, general and philosophical study of Being as it is or the study of Being *Qua* Being' (Jacquette, 2002). Metaphysics (*ta meta ta phusika*) therefore is a branch of philosophy that studies Being, not in compartments but Being in its entirety. It also studies not some specific beings but all beings in so far as they are existent.

Substantial, Accidental and Transcendental Antecedents of the Educational curriculum: According to ontological metaphysics, Being can be substantial (when it independently exists in itself as in the case of God) or Being can be accidental (when it is dependent on another being for its existence). Metaphysics also propounds that any Being (anything that there is) has properties that are transcendental. Mattei (1994) posits, "Being as such carries with itself some fundamental characteristics known as "transcendentals", namely, unity, truth and goodness" (p.136). On its part, Education may not be purely a metaphysical enterprise, but that it has metaphysical aspects is not refutable. For instance, when Education includes religious education in its curriculum, it merely espouses the metaphysical because then it deals with Being as *Substantia*, and when it teaches physical and biological sciences, it is recognising that 'being' is also *accidental*. When educationists stress that education should be holistic, that its primary focus is Truth and that it is good to be educated in values and aesthetics, it is merely expressing that Educational curriculum is infused with Transcendental properties of Unity, Truth and Goodness, respectively.

First Principles of Metaphysics as Premises of Educational Curriculum: First, The Principle of Non- Contradiction -it states "...a thing cannot at the same time be and not be" (Mattei, 1994, p. 137). In a democratic country, for instance, an education system that promotes the principles of anti-democracy would be in contradiction to its socio-political Philosophy. Any **normal** government will not propagate ideas that negate the philosophy of its country and such instances would be considered contradictory. This is because "a thing cannot at the same time be and not be". A country cannot at the same time be democratic and Authoritarian, and so is Education.

The second principle is The Principle of Identity. It states that "...every being is determined in itself, is one with itself, and is consistent in itself" (Mattei, 1994, p. 137). It is a standard curriculum precept that a curriculum should be unique to its consumers and should typically cater for the individual needs of learners, with respect to identity.

Thirdly, The Principle of The Excluded middle. This principle states "...there cannot be an intermediate between contradictions" (Mattei, 1994, p. 137). This Principle is mostly used in the moderating what seems to attempt to synthesise contradictions in Education. For instance attempts to make a student who has genuinely failed an exam being made to pass through monetary, sexual or other intermediates.

While this principle does not necessarily refute normalisation and moderation of exam results, it refutes illicit mediation that flounders moral principles in curriculum evaluation.

The fourth and the fifth principles, The Principles of causality and of Finality states "...whatever comes to be has a cause (and) ...every agent acts for an end...". In education these principles are observed when forming a curriculum, a curriculum comes to be because it was caused to be by Curriculum planners, politicians and other stakeholders. The expected results of a curriculum are its finality. When a teacher goes to class, his end-in-view is seen in his/her lesson plan objectives stated thus " by the end of the lesson, the learner should..."

3.3. Education and Epistemology

Epistemology is derived from two Greek words *επιστημη* (transliterated *Episteme*) which means "knowledge" and *λογος* (transliterated *Logos*) which means "the study of". Therefore epistemology is the study of knowledge. In the early days of Greek Philosophy Episteme and even today, Knowledge was contrasted with *δοξα* (transliterated *Doxa*) which means 'belief' (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009, p. 79). This means that belief is not knowledge. It is mere opinion. However, this assertion raises two important questions. From whence cometh knowledge? (This question addresses Sources of genuine knowledge) .The second question is What is the nature of knowledge? (Question about Nature of knowledge) (Ochieng -Odhiambo, 2009). Epistemology's objective is therefore to "...discover the means by which our knowledge is acquired, the extent of our knowledge and the...criteria by which we can judge the reliability of knowledge claims" (Popkin, Richard & Stroll, Avrum, 1996, p. 212).

Education on its part is epistemological in many ways for instance, educationists discourage mere regurgitation of knowledge. Any knowledge that does not meet the most straightforward criteria of justification, however beautiful it may appear, is reduced to a *Doxa*, an unsubstantiated superstition. It is merely an opinion at its best. Education proper seeks to make the learner knowledgeable and not to create parrots and copycats. Schools and some teachers have been accused miseducating learners by drilling learners and turning them into machines for producing ready-made answers. Wainaina (in Sifuna et al., 2006) asserts that students in such situation "...know but in a fragile sense of 'knowing' "(p.151). It is interesting that Wainaina puts knowing in quotes, this to the best of interpretation implies that it is not "knowing' in its proper sense.

Evidence in knowledge is explained by many sources of knowledge propounded by epistemology like authority, Sense perception, reason, intuition to mention but a few. It is no wonder that during research evidence and authority are pillars. Finally, consider Truth as concern Education. Truth is the aim of Education and Philosophy. It is also the foundation of Philosophy and Real Education. Epistemology presents correspondence, coherence and logical theories as a means of

determining Truth. These theories are used in different disciplines of education spectre.

IV. LOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL METHODS

The logical antecedent of Teaching Methods; Mattei(1994) defines logic as "...the art of sound discourse"(p.127). He further observes that "Logic is a discipline that prepares the mind for the study and practice of philosophy(and by extension education)...(it) can be described as an instrument proper to man in so far as he has rational"(p.127). The Stoic Philosophers described logic as the skeleton upon which the flesh of Philosophy is cast. Without logic, thinking becomes amorphous, incongruent and childish. Logic as a branch of Technical Philosophy is expressly a concern of education not only contentwise but also method-wise. Any formal education system makes sense only when it is presented in an orderly way, yet order is the central concern of logic. In his daily encounter, a teacher is at all times a logician, especially when dealing with professional preparation of lessons, delivery of lesson content and evaluation. The idea of moving from the known to unknown commonly used as a teaching method is borrowed from the logico-epistemological assertion that "By reasoning, our mind moves from what it already knows to what it does not know" (Phenix, 1961). This process (from known to unknown) corresponds applicable in Expository and Heuristic approaches of teaching.

Expository Approaches/ Deductive logic: Expository approaches are mostly teacher-centred and concerned primarily with conveying factual information to learners in a large class or hall. Learners are passive recipients of teacher's information (Kiruhi, Githua & Mboroki, 2009). Examples of methods of teaching under Expository approaches are Lecture Method, Drill, Demonstration and Narration. These methods assume Deductive logic(Reasoning from general/universal to Specific cases). Learners are expected to readily take in factual information researched by the teacher because a teacher is a Universal dispenser of truth. In the case of substantial numbers impediment, learners must have *uberima fidei*(*Utmost good faith*) towards the teacher and believe that teachers do not cheat. The teacher fulfils the aspect of generalisation of Deductivism while the learner is expected to follow up the content during their free time and in so doing, fulfilling the specificity aspect of deductivism.

Heuristic Approaches/ Inductive, Abductive and Reductive Logic; Heuristic approaches to teaching are learner-centred. Learners are active participants, seekers of information and liberated individuals(Kiruhi, Githua & Mboroki, 2009). Discussions, debates, questioning, role play, project work, group work are some of the methods under the heuristic approach. Much room is given to the learner to research and discover on their own with the facilitation of the teacher. This implies that the method appreciates the individual role of each learner in the general learning process of pedagogy- and this makes it an Inductive Logic. Inductive logic is reasoning from

particular instances (from individual observations) to general conclusions (Odhiambo, 2009). The teacher synthesises the different researches, debate points, discussion inferences and in so doing plays the role of Generalization while the individual learners and inferences fulfil the *specificity* aspect. In some cases, the teacher leaves the findings of learners open so that they order the best possible explanations as most preferred to less plausible explanations(Abductive logic). At a higher level, a teacher asks learners to find contradictions to commonly held' truths, and this accrues from Reductive logic.

V. CONCLUSION

Having observed that education is philosophical in its aims, its content and its methods. It is therefore logical that if there is anything, if that thing is education, then it is philosophical: And if it is philosophical, then it can be seen as Philosophy but in *participatio*. Education participates in the philosophiness of Philosophy to a degree. It is also important to note that in as much as Education can be seen as philosophy. It is not philosophy. Pure philosophy raises more questions than answers, and it does rightly so because that is its nature. Education, on the other hand, seems to be contented with many answers. Philosophy and even philosophy of Education itself attempt to raise the question on matters education. Lastly, all educative processes cannot happen without Cognition. Even if we were learning emotional development, the human mind could not be avoided, were we to learn food production or Engineering, some thinking must take place, An athlete will need his mind in manipulating through the world of sports. Therefore, the ultimate aim of education and philosophy should be to sharpen human intelligence first. Education should be critical enough to be determined on whether it is more or less philosophical. This requires *Intellectual conversion* (Cronin, 2005, pp. 310-311).

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