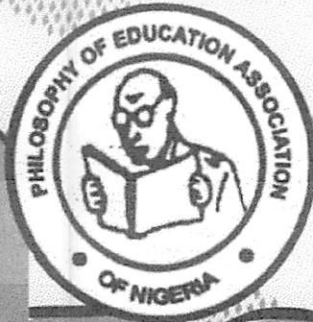


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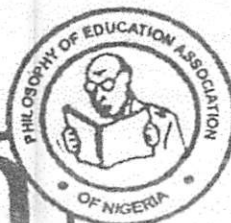
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PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL ETHICS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss the issue of Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics in Nigeria. In the process it discusses Philosophy of Education, Social Ethics, Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics, and finally Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics in Nigeria. The paper engages in the discussion using the research method of philosophical analysis: which in the paper involves logical analysis, linguistic analysis, expository analysis, and critical analysis. It was discussed that Philosophy of Education involves reflection about education with the view to attain reality, knowledge, and values, based on systematic and coherent reasoning on the whole domain of our experience of the universe. It was also discussed that social ethics involves what is good or bad in the society, and what is right or wrong in the society; with the view to pursue what is good and right. It was also discussed that Philosophy of Education for social ethics involves reflection on education for good social policies and behaviour. It was observed that the Nigerian situation is that the society demonstrates lack of fear of God at the national level, and social insecurity, poor educational behaviour, bad economy, and so forth. It was also discussed that the indicators of bad social behaviour derive from lack of fear of God generally; and therefore for genuinely good social behaviour in terms of education, politics, social security, economy, health, and so forth, philosophy of education in Nigeria should emphasize genuinely good religious education as a core learning experience.

Key words: *Philosophy of education, social ethics, philosophical analysis, religious education, fear of God*

Introduction

This paper attempts to discuss Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics generally and for Social Ethics in Nigeria in particular. In the process, Philosophy of Education is discussed in terms of its features generally; and social ethics is also discussed in terms of its features. Then Philosophy of Education and Social Ethics are discussed such as to reflect on Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics. Finally, Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics in Nigeria is also discussed.

The method of philosophical analysis is used in the research. The philosophical analysis used include: logical analysis, linguistic analysis, expository analysis, and critical analysis¹. The topic is considered important because of the need to reflect on Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics in Nigeria; judging by various social happenings in Nigeria in recent years: some of which include social insecurity and crises in the educational sector.

Philosophy of Education

Philosophy of education is concerned with systematic and coherent reasoning about the whole domain of our experience of the universe, such as to determine the function of education in the attainment of reality, knowledge, and values². It is concerned with systematic and coherent reasoning about metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological issues with emphasis on education³. It is speculative, prescriptive and analytic in its approach⁴.

Hirst and Peters in the *Logic of Education* observed that "Generally speaking, ... philosophers of education are specifically interested in educational matters and philosophize in order to get clearer about how things are and about what should be done in this particular realm"⁵.

Philosophy of education is concerned with a "critique of the philosophical assumptions of the existing educational systems and practices from the standpoint of compatibility, consistency and adequacy, in the light of the growing body of human knowledge"⁶. It is also concerned "with developing ... a positive conception of what education ought to be in the light of as much information about man, society, and the universe as he can muster from all available areas of experience and knowledge"⁷. From the foregoing it can be observed that Philosophy of education is analytic and speculative in its approach. Moreover in the process logical analysis, linguistic analysis, expository analysis and critical analysis are engaged in. Also it can be seen from the foregoing that philosophy of education is not only interested in *the process* of education but also in *the product* of education. Thus the educated man for instance is not so described only in terms of the process of acquisition of knowledge and understanding but also in terms of the behaviour he displays in connection with the total development of man and the society.

This leads to the next point of discussion in the paper, which is ethics, and particularly social ethics.

Social Ethics

Ethics involves discussion in axiology; a major branch of philosophy. Axiology involves discussion of values. In this regard there are public values, private values, religious values, educational values, political values, moral values and various other values. There are social values and personal/private values.

Ethics particularly involves issues of moral values. Issues of right and wrong, good and bad. This can be in social perspective or private perspective. It can be in educational perspective and several other perspectives. What is good educationally? What is bad educationally? What is right educationally? What is wrong educationally? These are issues of ethics in the perspective of education. They are issues that Peters in *Ethics and Education*⁸ discussed thoroughly. Education is an issue of social ethics.

Respecting the right of the learner is right educationally in the process of education.

Recognizing the interest and ability of the learner is right in the process of educating the learner. This would ensure that the teacher makes allowance for the freedom of the learner to learn according to his level of psychological development. It would also ensure that the teacher recognizes the environmental factors surrounding the learning process of the learner; whereby the ability and environment would play complementary roles in the learning process of the learner in the teaching-learning activities.

The curriculum that is the learning experience; would thus be generated from the need as well as the readiness of the learner to learn in a gradual process⁹. All these are issues of good and bad; and right and wrong dimensions of education in *the process* of education and *the product* of education. They are issues of ethics in education as a social matter.

As has been observed social ethics would feature discussion of what is good, what is bad, what is right, and what is wrong in terms of education, health, feeding, politics, religion, governance, economy, marriage, accommodation, legal matters, and so forth; such as would affect the social relationships of people and things in the society. Social ethics is therefore a very important issue that warrants philosophical discussion; since as has been observed it affects social relationships of people and things in the society. Education, governance, economy, security, accommodation, religion, marriage, health and related issues have been mentioned as examples of issues in social ethics. But this paper would be interested in discussing just a few of these issues in terms of Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics and particularly in terms of "Philosophy of education for social ethics in Nigeria".

The issues would include religion, education, governance, security, health, and economy. These are selected because the writer considers these social issues to be very crucial in the existence of a society. Religion is an integral part of man when man is seen as created by God, whereby he cannot exist without Divine creation and whereby he cannot learn (he cannot be educated) without Divine input. This is what some people describe as innate ability¹⁰. In this connection religion would be seen to be more important than education because without Divine creation and consequently religious origin, man can not contemplate education.

This writer is inclined to think that religion and education have higher roles to play in the issues of social ethics than others (e.g. economy, security, and so forth) when Divine creation is contemplated as the origin of man; whereby economy and other social issues cannot be more important than religion. It is recognized that arguments have been adduced for evolution rather than creation as the origin of man¹¹. The metaphysical branch of philosophy is of good interest. But the issue of discussion in this paper is social ethics not strictly metaphysics. So it would be alright to proceed to discuss philosophy of education and social ethics into greater details at this point.

Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics

Without good reflection on social ethics a society is not likely to flourish. It is likely to be directed by the dictates of other societies that are convinced about the need to have great reflection on social ethics.

Thus good reflection on social ethics enhances social behaviour. A society that has great reflection on social ethics, when such reflection is good, is likely to have good behaviour in social issues including religion, education, security of lives and property, economy, health.

politics, and so forth. On the contrary a society that does not bother so much about reflecting on social ethics is not likely to behave well in social matters. The policies and practices of such society (country) would be patterned haphazardly after those of societies that take great care to reflect on the issues of social ethics: for instance in the areas of religion, education, politics, economy, security of lives and property, health and so forth.

Thus great reflection about social ethics, taking time to philosophize about social ethics, is of great importance to any society and to any nation. This also implies that philosophy of education about social ethics is of great importance to any nation. Philosophizing about political ethics might make a nation to embrace the socio-political ideology of democracy; which might consequently guide the political direction of a country (e.g. the United States of America) such that the governance, the education, the health, economy and security issues are dictated by the socio-political ideology of democracy. Whereas embracing the political ideology of democratic socialism might guide the political direction of certain other societies such that the education, the security, the economy, and health issues of such societies are dictated by the socio-political ideology of democratic socialism.

A society, a country, that does not take good care to philosophize about social ethics would be moving between the dictates of democracy and democratic socialism or communism and so forth in its political behaviour; such that such a society would be influenced by the directions of other societies that already have settled decisions (reflections) about political ethics. Such an uncertain society (in terms of philosophizing about social ethics) is bound to have uncertain political policies and practices, uncertain educational policies and practices, uncertain health policies and practices, uncertain security policies and practices, and so forth.

The implication is that such uncertain societies (and uncertain countries) would flourish at the wish of societies and countries that are certain about social ethics.

Thus certainty of societies in terms of social ethics which include religious ethics, political ethics, educational ethics, health ethics, security ethics, economy ethics and so forth is of crucial importance. And this is why it is important that each society (each country) gives good thought, good reflection, to the issue of social ethics. That is why philosophy for social ethics is important; and that is also why philosophy of education for social ethics is important.

Philosophy of Education for Social Ethics in Nigeria

Philosophy of education, which involves reflection about education, has been seen to be important in the sense that it would enhance reflection about education, such as to determine the function of education in the attainment of reality, knowledge and values, based on the whole domain of our experience of the universe¹². Thus philosophy of education would enhance performance in education in terms of the learning experience (the curriculum) that is supposed to be embraced by the society in the process of thorough reflection.

For instance should the society embrace the learning experience of Darwinism or Divine Creation in the process of religious education? Should the society embrace the learning experience of democracy or democratic socialism, or communism in the process of political education? Should the society embrace the learning experience of homosexuality or not in the process of marriage education? Should the society embrace capitalism, or free

market economy, or labour intensive economy in a developing society like Nigeria? Should down-sizing of labour (capital intensive economy) be more important than labour intensive economy in a developing country like Nigeria? Should corruption in political elections at all levels and in economy be treated with levity in the socio-political milieu in any country including developing countries like Nigeria?

These are only a few of religious, political, economy, social security, health, and other related ethical issues that can feature in the learning experiences in the education of a society (a country). Thus philosophy of education concerning all these issues are of crucial importance. And as has been seen they are all of crucial importance in the Nigerian society too.

It follows that philosophy of education for social ethics is of crucial importance in Nigeria in terms of what learning experiences (curriculum) to pursue in the issues of religion, education itself, politics, economy, health, and social security. Indication of this issue has been identified variously by: Fafowora¹³, Clinton¹⁴, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)¹⁵. Thus philosophy of education for social ethics in Nigeria deserves to be carefully pursued in our educational policies and practices if Nigeria would develop in terms of social ethics.

For now Nigeria, as has been indicated by some people and even some government organizations, is not doing well in the area of social security¹⁶. Moreover in the area of education itself, a lot of school age children are not in school, which is not good in terms of social ethics for Nigeria with specific reference to education¹⁷. In addition the tertiary educational institutions are largely witnessing the problem of industrial action in terms of lecturers in universities not working for some months¹⁸.

The economy is also not doing well in spite of the impression in some quarters that it is doing well. For instance the strength of the Naira (the Nigerian currency) used to be at par with that of the Dollar in the 1960's and early 1970's but since 1980's up till now the trend has been bad. Now 1 Dollar is exchanged for ₦156!¹⁹.

Corruption has been on the increase²⁰; materialism rather than fear of God has been on the increase too; such that the Nigerian society behaves in a way that is not impressive in terms of social ethics. It follows that philosophy of education for social ethics is very important in Nigerian policies and practices and particularly in Nigeria's philosophy of education.

Thus Nigeria's philosophy of education as well as Nigeria's practices of education, and indeed Nigeria's social behaviour generally, should lay more emphasis on good social ethics; which to the mind of this writer would be founded on good religious education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has discussed the issue of philosophy of education for social ethics in Nigeria. It was discussed that philosophy of education involves reflection about education with the view to help in the attainment of reality, knowledge, and values, based on systematic and coherent reasoning on the whole domain of our experience of the universe²¹. It was also discussed that social ethics involves reflection on issues of good and bad in the society; but this is with the view to pursue good behaviour in the society. Religious, political, educational, economic, and related issues are discussed.

Moreover it was discussed that features of social ethics in the Nigerian society do not give indication of good social behaviour generally. This is particularly so in terms of social security, education, economy, religion, politics, and so forth.

It was thought by the writer that the basis of the unimpressive social ethics in Nigeria is lack of fear of God as a nation; and therefore genuine religious education should be a core learning experience in Nigerian education. Thus philosophy of education for social ethics in Nigeria should pay great attention and good attention to the issue of religious education in the learning experiences in Nigerian education.

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