TEACHING

METHODOLOGY
in
THE HUMANITIES

EDITED BY
'Raheem Adebayo LAWAL

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R. Adebayo LAWAL, Ph.D.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Sebutu S. ABDULGANIY (Ph.D.)** is an Islamic Studies Education lecturer in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
2. **Musa S. ABDULLAHI (M.Ed.)** teaches Arabic Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
3. **Ezekiel A. ABE (Ph.D.),** a deceased Professor of Language Education, was a former Director of the Institute of Education, University of Ilorin.
4. **Zeinab A. ABUDU (M.A.)** is a lecturer in French Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
5. **A. O. ABURIME (Ph.D.)** is a Comparative Education lecturer in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
6. **Surajudeen O. ADEGBOYE (Ph.D.)** teaches Economics Education and Curriculum Studies in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin.
7. **Folakemi O. ADENIYI-EGBEOLA (Ph.D.)** a Senior Lecturer in English Education and Applied Linguistics is the Acting Head of the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
8. **Abdulrahman U. AJIDAGBA (Ph.D.)** is a Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin, but currently on leave of absence with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Abuja.
9. **Surajudeen A. BADRU (M.Ed.)** teaches Yoruba Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
10. **M. B. BELLO (Ph.D.)** is a Senior Lecturer in Social Studies Education in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin.
11. **Yekeen BELLO (Ph.D.)** is a Senior Lecturer in English Education and Applied Linguistics in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
12. **Alice A. JEKAYINFA (Ph.D.)** is a retired Professor of Social Studies/History Education and former Head of the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin.
13. **O. J. JEKAYINFA (M.Ed.)** teaches Comparative Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
14. **M. A. LAWAL (Ph.D.)** teaches Arabic Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
15. **R. Adebayo LAWAL (Ph.D.)** a Professor of English Education and Applied Linguistics in the Department of Arts Education, is a former HOD, Director of Institute of Education, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) at University of Ilorin.
16. **Victoria O. ÒGÚNNÍRAN (M.Ed.)** teaches Yoruba Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
17. **Oludare D. OJO (Ph.D.)** is a lecturer of Christian Religious Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.

18. **A.G.A.S. OLADOSU (Ph.D.)** a retired Professor of Arabic Education is a former HOD, Director of Academic Planning and Director of the Centre for Ilorin Studies at University of Ilorin.
19. **Stephen B. OLAJIDE (Ph.D.)** is a Reader in English Education and Applied Linguistics and a former Acting Head of the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
20. **A. J. OLANIYI (M.Ed.)** teaches Philosophy of Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
21. **Kehinde S. OLOWOKERE (Ph.D.)** is a former lecturer of Christian Religious Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
22. **A. F. OYELADE (Ph.D.)** is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Education and former Acting Head of the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
23. **Abubakar SAIDU (Ph.D.)** teaches History and Policy of Education in the Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin.
24. **Afsat SANNI-SULEIMAN (Ph.D.)** is a Senior lecturer and Acting Head of the French Department, University of Ilorin.
25. **Muraina YUSUF (Ph.D.)** teaches English at Al-Adabiyyatul Kamaliyyah Senior Secondary School, Ilorin.

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A. F. OYELADE &
A. J. OLANIYI

INTRODUCTION

Moral education is education in morality, that is education in moral judgement about right and wrong, good and bad, ought and ought not, desirable and undesirable. It is education in the principles of moral judgement, as well as in the actual behaviour. This is because education in the principles should lead to actual practice of the principles (Archambault, 1963; Peters, 1974; Akinpelu, 2005).

Morality is concerned with harmonious social relationship among human beings, that is, consciousness of justice and fairness to others (Frankena, 1976). Education in morality should therefore stimulate the thinking ability of the learners towards finding solutions to the moral problems which they and the society face (Kohlberg and Hersh, 1983; Gbadegesin, 1988).

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to discuss the following:

1. morality;
2. moral education;
3. moral education based on man's ability to reason;
4. moral education based on spiritual origin of man; and
5. the need to pursue a sound moral education.

MORAL EDUCATION BASED ON MAN'S ABILITY TO REASON

While it is recognised that justiceis the foundation of all moral principles (Frankena, 1976; Gbadegesin, 1988), Kohlberg and Hershpropose stages of moral development in children and adults representing increasing adequate conceptions of justice and expanding capacity for empathy (Kohlberg & Hersh 1983). The stages eventually end with ability to apply universal principles of justice.

This cognitive development approach to moral education is a deontological approach which indicates that moral reasoning develops over time through a series of stages. The process of moral education should therefore recognise the rationality of the child as a thinking being and also as a moral agent. It should also present actual moral situations that would aid the moral reasoning of the learner.

The actual moral situations are to aid the learning of the principles that can be regarded as universal ethical principles. Thus when one acts in a particular way in a situation one does so under a principle. That is, one does so with the implication that all other people in a similar situation would be expected to behave the same way. The implication is that one prescribes the action as a universal principle. The categorical behaviour which one thinks could be universalised as good moral behaviour is what Immanuel Kant describes as Categorical Imperative (Paton, 1963). "Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become universal law" (p. 88).

In all the above, moral education is not considered to be in the domain of religious bodies, nor in the domain of the home. Rather moral education is considered to be a reason-based education that should be delivered by the school, based on the various principles of morality thought-out and developed with time. The principles are expected to be dynamic, not static (see for instance Dewey, 1953; Gbadegesin, 1988; Russell, 2004; Akinpelu, 2005).

MORAL EDUCATION BASED ON SPIRITUAL ORIGIN OF MAN

From the foregoing it is evident that philosophers generally consider moral education as capable of stimulating the reason of the learner to develop principles and actions that would promote social harmony and justice. However, some philosophers think that man's reason is not perfect and thus could not serve as sound basis to stimulate moral education. This is because these philosophers think that man is not only a physical being with ability to reason but also a spiritual being with a spiritual origin. Thus, his dependence on reasoning ability without recourse tothe spiritual origin of the physical and the rational would be incomplete and faulty. The spiritual origin of man, according to these philosophers, is God. God has to be relied on for good reasoning about man's moral principles and actions to be adequate (see for instance Acquinas, 1923; Brunner, 1946; Rene Descartes, 1960).

It is on this basis that Religious education is expected to be capable of teaching moral principles and actions too. To be sure, this position is such that moral education without regard for the spiritual background cannot be regarded as adequate. However, the problem is that there are various religious bodies with various moral principles and actions. In many cases the principles and actions of different religions are conflicting and could predispose the learner to moral confusion. Therefore, there has to be ways of resolving the conflicting principles and actions such as to harmonise the moral education that would be given learners whereby their reasoning would be stimulated in a coherent manner.

Moreover, moral education teachers (who in this case include members of the larger society) should be positively disposed to teaching the moral principles and actions with practical demonstrations from their own lifestyles too, otherwise the learners would think little of the moral principles and actions they are taught in the moral education classes. This is very important because moral education is in the affective domain. The teachers cannot be teaching one thing and be behaving in the opposite way: learners would not internalise such teaching.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Moral education from philosophical perspective warrants consideration of education from reason-based perspective and spirit-based perspectives, whereby the spiritual origin of man (God) is emphasised. Moral education, that is, education on principles and behaviour that are right or wrong and desirable or undesirable, is expected to pursue a process that is sound and can lead to total development of man and his behaviour.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1a. State in brief the meaning of moral education.

b. State in brief the position of philosophers on moral education based on man's ability to reason.

2a. State in brief the position of philosophers on moral education based on man's spiritual origin

b. Discuss the need for moral education in the society based on your own impression about the two philosophical positions in this chapter.

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