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EMERGING PHILOSOPHIES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND ADULT LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There are principles from pragmatism, existentialism, humanism, and radicalism that have relevance for educational practices in Nigeria, notwithstanding the ongoing debate in educational discussions over whether Nigerian education is based on any philosophy. Traces of these philosophies can be read in educational thoughts, trends and practices in Nigeria. The fact that Nigeria had for years engaged in varied educational activities presupposes that if there is not a single philosophy, then there are many philosophies guiding the country's educational practices. From the colonial era to the contemporary society, educational practices have changed because of the educational objectives that were set in responding to the changing society. From these changes, one can show that there are orientations behind the educational practices in Nigeria. Earlier explanations discussed these ideas as separated and unrelated but this paper uses narrative review to respond to the question: what are the emerging philosophies for educational programmes in Nigeria. This was done by providing a general overview and interpretations of educational thoughts and activities. It considers those elements of many philosophies of education that have guided activities especially in educational activities generally, and adult education particularly while it teased out the common elements in the system. The four philosophies place emphasis on individuality awareness creation and functionality of learners in organisations and community they find themselves.

Keywords: Emerging philosophies, educational programmes, adult learning and eclecticism

Introduction

Emerging philosophies suggest many fast growing ideas or thoughts that underlie practices of educational programmes and Adult learning in particular. This paper intends to tease out the essential elements of the four philosophies of pragmatism, existentialism, humanism and radicalism so as to attempt a coherent combination of ideas that could guide Adult Education practices in the new world order that prize functionality and utilitarianism above pure idealism. It should be

pointed out that the formal educational programme only serves as a background for this reflection. The authors do not assume the responsibility of developing philosophies for such educational system that is already tilting towards the nonformal by including student centredness and inclusiveness in order to remain relevant.

Educational trend in Nigeria

There are practices of education and Adult Education that date back to the pre-colonial and colonial eras which are still operational in the post-colonial Nigeria. In the post-colonial and modern times, educational practices are moving towards concrete realities such as skill acquisition, vocational programmes, employment opportunities for school graduates and empowerment programmes for the vulnerable. Some have tagged this development as 'bread and butter education', but it appears to be an attractive idea for educational practices in developing countries facing the persisting problem of alarming poverty that deprives more people access to basic needs of life like food, shelter, clothing, information and education. This is why educational policies in the contemporary era direct attention to what education can practically do for individuals and the society.

Guided by the principle of usability, the National Universities Commission benchmark for accrediting the discipline of Adult Education stated that skill acquisition centres should be established in the departments so that graduates can have at least one skill or another during their school days. This gives credence to the belief that Adult Education programmes should give its participants better livelihood as well as enhance their quality of lives after graduation. The initiative also supports the over thirty years of 9-3-4 (six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, then minimum of four years in tertiary institution) system of education in Nigeria. It was meant to ensure that secondary school education has the components of technical and vocational education.

The adult education provision outside the formal school system makes it possible for learners who could not attend regular school to have access to public examinations for primary school leaving certificates, junior secondary school and senior secondary school certificates. How well the state agencies of mass literacy and non-formal education have coordinated this programme is another issue? The fact remains that candidates have access to public examination without necessarily going through the formal school system as private individuals. This is more successful at the secondary school level where examinations have both regional and national inputs in West African Examination Council, General Certificates of Education and National Examination Council. If the programme at the secondary level has succeeded, then why introduce another like it at a higher level. Having introduced skill acquisition programme with adult education programmes, there is the need to ask if the desired objectives of the programme are being achieved. Undergraduates complain that university based skill acquisition programmes lack varieties that should be available to them and are bothered about the mode of acquisition. Graduates who miss the opportunity of acquiring skill at higher institutions are again

confronted with the plea by government and parents to subscribe for such trainings in the Skill Acquisition Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme during the one - year National Youth Service Commission (NYSC) compulsory service to the nation. Despite all these, Nigerians are still unemployed and are at the mercy of politicians, social and religious organisations who mount caricature empowerment programmes to solicit for votes or other kinds of patronage. We should ask the critical question about why these programmes hardly really empower most of the participants?

Emerging philosophies of education

The popularity of functional education has a historical background from the more advanced economies especially, in the American system of education. Pragmatism came as a reaction to liberalism and there are subsequent ideas that challenged pragmatism. The critics ask why pragmatism does not give characteristics of 'what works', and that the orientation promotes the denial of individual difference in the applicability to varied personalities and societies. Existentialism and humanism challenged pragmatism to the extent of establishing training gap, and went ahead to ensuring that participants' interest in vocational and empowerment programmes are first identified. The effort of pragmatic humanists is noted in reconciling the differences of the schools of thought. Humanism and pragmatism are natural allies, since they share basic principles and goals, and endorse taking an emancipatory look at authorities by highlighting individual autonomy and critical thinking as vital to human development.

From the point of view of increasing electronic learning as occasioned by COVID 19 pandemic, online learning has also emerged as a radical departure from the formal and rigid educational system to a more inclusive online programmes that awards certificate of participation and completion to learners regardless of sex, age, location and other biases. By these practices of educational programmes, there are elements of radicalism in adult learning and education.

Aims of Education

The all-important activity of education is based on beliefs and practices. In words that contain much repetition and overlap from authors and associations where education is seen as the most important weapon for changing the world, the source of growth and development, the improvement of human life and increase chances of employment. Education makes communication with other people easier and sustains the societal values. One can hardly dispute any of these benefits in which education gives what to which people and how? Is it the formal; non-formal or informal? Whitehead engaged his community in the dialogue of what formal education should aim at. What we should aim at according to him is producing men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction' (emphasis ours). He believed that while socialisation would make a person have identity and interaction with immediate environment, expertise is required to justify the establishment of the formal school system where professionals are meant to be and do the business of developing in those who access their work, some capacities which may be alien to the immediate community.

Expertise could be the reason for the definition of education as the acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge. In his paper he still espoused what education should do. It should eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kill the vitality of modern curriculum. There should be only one subject matter for education and that is life in all its manifestation. Education is life — not a mere preparation for an unknown kind of future of future living Whitehead added that the processes of exhibiting the application of knowledge must for its success essentially depend on the character of the pupils and the geniuses of the teacher. This could suggest that character of pupils, and geniuses of teachers are fundamental to the application of knowledge which Whitehead prioritised.

Application of knowledge supports the promotion of the economic aim of education. The significant vocational aspect of individual fulfillment through employment and social wellbeing through material prosperity was the position of Winch. The response of Winch to Whitehead contains significant errors and omissions because his definition of work is problematic and can lead to a conclusion that education should be directed towards very narrow vocational targets. The views on individual and community aims of education were presented by Portelli and Menashy. Their emphasis on community dimension of education consists of an argument against Winch that he focused more on the individual than the society. The line between the individual and the community may not be so clear-cut since an individual remains a reflection of the community and community could also be seen as large individuals. This idea is credited to Plato that a society remains an individual writ large.

Before the controversy of individual and community aim of education, Moshman had gone beyond development and thinking skills as aims of education to rationality - self-reflective, intentional and appropriate coordination, and use of genuine reason in generating and justifying beliefs and behaviour. He further cautioned that an educational system that limits itself to inculcation of ideas will be morally suspect in that it may treat students solely as a means to further the ends of those who select the ideas and values to inculcate.

The goals of education as encapsulated in national policies of education are usually lofty. In Nigeria, the national policy of education aimed at a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. That of India aims at producing engaged, productive and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by the constitution. These aims are futuristic and they have to be based on patterns of thought which shall be referred to as philosophies in this paper. From the policies on education from the two commonwealth countries of India and Nigeria, one can identify the aims of education as both for individuals and the society at large. While that of Nigeria puts the society first, India favours the individual before the society. As it has been pointed out before, the dividing line

between the two aims can be slim.

Rather than limit educational philosophies to four as prescribed as perennialism, essentialism, progressivism and reconstructionism on what to teach, those to be synthesized as emerging philosophies will concentrate on how to promote learning. This is because the assumption of Knowles already gives a background that adults know what they want to learn before approaching the learning experiences. Adults look for instructors who have the skill, attitude and competencies they want. Adults also easily leave discouraging learning situations to another. The implications of andragogy have been that instructor must not be autocratic and the method must seek to tap previous experiences of the adult learners as a resource for learning.

Aim of Adult Learning

Functionality remains important in the goal of adult learning as seen in the Nigerian national policy of education where the goals of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education are stated as: it shall provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youth who have never had the advantage of formal education and also provide functional and remedial education for those young people who did not complete secondary education. The goal arose from the earlier pages that says Nigeria believes in 'functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education

The concept of functionality changes to self-reliance when stating the goals of tertiary education. It shall be inter alia make individuals acquire intellectual skills which will enable them to be self - reliant and useful members of the society. This section only supports the closing sentence under the aim of education in this paper that adults take control of whatever they want to learn, which makes functionality and self-reliance subjective as viewed by the individual adult learner whom Knowles also stated should be self-directed. The question of the use of education dominates the philosophies that should guide educational activities.

Philosophies for Educational Programmes

Against the knowledge for knowledge sake of liberal education, pragmatism, an advance stage of progressivism confronted the idealism and realism of liberalism by asking of what use is education which takes much time, energy, resources, efforts and commitment. 'Education for what' became the popular slogan and the programmes of education in developing countries made considerable attempts to address these problems. Unfortunately, those who benefitted from liberal education were the ones who have to solve the problem of non-functionality of education in terms of which professions would make school leavers able to stand on their own and be useful to that society represented by government for investing in education of its citizens. The battle for governments to increase investment in education remains between government and unions in developing countries. Nigerian government is registering private universities and charging public universities not to rely on government.

The elements of curriculum usefulness to society will continue to challenge educational programmes nevertheless, pragmatism was not free from the attack that it narrowed down educational activities to what is in it for the society through the medium of the individuals who are the ones that subject themselves to discipline, training and restraints. Scholars who support the wave of functionality have been asked to incorporate tolerance, flexibility, individuality and thoughtfulness since human beings are not machines that do not have a say in what happens to them. The greatest attack on pragmatism by humanism would be a description of usefulness and functionality using their terms in concrete terms. This means that what is useful to every society cannot be the same. Why is it that all students who attend schools should seek academic excellence but what of those who prioritize social interaction in school more than the academic achievement? Although, societal needs are often expressed in policies and regulations, but could every individual needs be met by the guiding principles and regulations? The position that tends to come from this would be that majority must always have its way but is the society truly tangible like an individual whose interest can easily be identified?

With the humanistic and existentialists queries that provoke usability of education, there is a radicalisation of educational programmes brought about by the super highways of the twenty first century through varied and growing online programmes. These are promoting greater individualisation of learning processes at the learner's pace and place. The concept of de-schooling society had predicted this. There is also the underlying assumption of pragmatism that sciences, mathematics and engineering be promoted more in the educational institutions as a preparation for industrialisation of the society. However, how much of these preferred courses can easily be taught by mediated facilities which allow for the use of electrical devices with little or no references to the human factors that facilitate on the programmes?

Despite the position of radical educational programmes on electronic devices, and the issues of individuation although not situated in literature with other schools of thought, Jane Dawson noted that 'it is often the case that individualism is used more as a slogan than as a topic discussed in depth'.

Philosophies of Adult Learning

The widely referenced Lorraine Zinn philosophy of adult education inventory was designed to assist the adult educator identify personal philosophy and compare it with prevailing philosophies in the field of Adult Education. For example, Roger Hiemstra's work explain the reasons for a personal philosophy as basically in the promotion of relationship with others especially, learners. This has been noted in the introduction that most of the literature available on philosophies of adult education are based on Zinn's work that limit the orientations to five on the scales of seven.

This paper combines the personal orientation of adult educators with the prevailing idea that education must serve the need of the society. The paper has deliberately put philosophies of adult learning after philosophies of educational programmes because in Nigeria and some other countries, it is the formal educational

system that runs the adult education by its policies and administrative structures. This remains one of the major problems of adult educational programmes in the countries where adult education is considered to be the ringworm whose cure should not be concentrated on instead of leprosy which is believed to be the deadlier disease. How far from the truth and reality?

It could also be considered that Adult education predates formal educational system because the leaders of the community were the ones who gave their consent for the establishment of the schools and those who serve as catechists, clerks and guide of the missionaries and business men were not in any way less adults. More fundamentally, education would first be in the informal and non-formal before it becomes formal for every individual. The role of parents and leaders in the education of children cannot be downplayed.

There was a conversation with a catholic nun who was sent to the university in order to operate a nursery and primary school. She was regretting her admission to the department of adult education because the ministry of education said the degree in adult education was not relevant for the operations of the school. The argument was turned against them by asking who are those responsible for taking care of children who attend nursery and primary school and they answered the parents. So, they were told that an expert in adult education should be more suited for the nursery and primary school because the individual will be able to relate better with parents and teachers who are bound to have immediate contact with their dependent children.

Another example of misunderstanding occurs when graduates of Adult Education are denied opportunity to mark West African Examination Council, National Examination Council or General Certificate of Education scripts in their subject areas with the belief that they do not have competencies in such areas. Although some professional adult education programmes have been mounted in universities in specialized areas of literacy, social welfare, community development and industrial education, but majority of university adult education programmes have teaching subjects in which the students are examined during teaching practice, and without these courses, they cannot graduate from universities. This means that professional adult educators must find ways of enlightening the relevant government agencies and officers to accord the discipline the distinction that is due to it.

The inclusiveness of Adult Education as a discipline allows everyone to have access to it. Some people find themselves in the discipline due to mismatch of subject combination at secondary levels. At times, candidates come to adult education by chance for the space available to have a degree. Many candidates because of exposure and indecision on career path hardly select adult education as their first choice. They end up there after being enlightened by the students or staff of the department on the courses available and prospects of career.

Undergraduates have been worried about why adult education according to them is a dumping ground for those who never had interest in coming to the department and those who could not make required grades for higher levels in the university. Rather than perceive this as a problem, it should be seen as the nature of the discipline to accommodate all. Like market structure in economics talk about

perfect market where there is free entry and free exit, adult education typifies a perfect education where everyone is welcome. A teacher should not say a learner cannot understand anything, so also adult educator cannot turn anyone away as being unable to learn. This does not make the discipline cheap but rather credible.

The role of Adult Education in Educational Programmes

The issues in philosophy of adult education go beyond theories or philosophical schools; it extends to the identifiable roles of Adult Education in educational programmes. In a straight forward sense, philosophy encourages context and the analysis of concepts in adult education with a view to getting clearer picture of the concepts being analysed. In the opinion of Akinpelu, the role of philosophy in adult education is in five dimensions: theoretical postulation, explication of the aims and objectives of Adult education, exemplification of adult education issues and problems, analysis of concepts and terms in adult education, and introduction of new concepts and ideologies. To say that philosophy postulates theory in adult education is to say that it brings up new ideologies to the field of adult education thereby bringing up relevant schools and philosophies to bear on the programmes and practices of adult education. This is a critical step in making adult education relevant to times and tunes of education practices. For instance, the idea of andragogy as a method of teaching in adult education is an emerging model that was invented as a result of theoretical postulations in adult education.

The role of philosophy in adult education became more pronounced through explication of the aims and objectives of Adult education. Philosophy led adult education to have firm grip of its aims and objectives, and several issues and problems in adult education are dissolved through philosophical exemplifications. It is germane to note that all fields of human endeavours depend largely on the role of philosophy in the analysis of relevant concepts and terms; this is also present in adult education. Through analysis, counter analysis, synthesis, raising theses and counter theses, raising arguments and discussions, philosophy helps in the field of adult education. These five roles according to Akinpelu, are "the philosophical underpinning of adult education and the ideological framework are capable of promoting the contemplative intellect of adult educator and adult learners in adult education"

Further, the role of philosophy in adult education includes giving consideration to the emerging practices in adult education. Few of these practices are in transactional comparative practice, andragogical teaching methodology and adult education contextualities. Transactional comparative study has the process of adopting philosophical steps and unravelling the objectives of adult education programmes and practices which entail analysing, corroborating, synthesising and summations. In the opinion of Malcolm Knowles cited by Ojo, andragogy is a process of making adult learners feel involved in their own education. This submission deduces that the main aim of philosophy of adult education is to make learners own their education and not making them be like robots or at the receiving end but as the knower and the known. Knowles further enlist the emerging role of

adult education as that of the societal reformer, thereby making education a requisite for all human development and fostering life. It is on this note that adult educators are encouraged to consider a broad spectrum of philosophical tradition that can expand the theory and practices of the field of adult education.

Conclusion

This paper should not be seen merely as a promotion of eclecticism as an emerging thought in educational programmes and adult learning programmes in Nigeria. It should rather be seen as a reflection on the ideas that guide the principles and practices of education. The arguments against eclecticism are important to the nature of the paper, that is, 'it is quantitative and not qualitative', and also as used by Kevin, that eclecticism can be a 'vignette representative of regular occurrences in psychotherapy. Like psychotherapy, several philosophies underpin educational practices. These paper has brought out the concepts that emerge as dominating ideas in philosophies of adult learning which are functionality and individuality. These two concepts can be integrated in a statement as educational efforts should be in making learners functional individuals with real communal interest.

Recommendation

This means that the courses of adult education in most Nigerian tertiary institutions are poorly advertised for the benefits of the general public. Deliberate efforts ought to be made in order to put the information on adult education programmes in the public domain in order to attract young people to pick it as a creditable and fulfilling career path. If non-professionals can make success out of adult education techniques, then more is expected from those who have been certified as professionals or are in training of adult education specialisation. Adult education undergraduates and graduates have extensive area of career choices, while they need to face the stark reality of who they are, and what career choices they want. They need to identify their area of interest at the early stage of the course so that they can develop themselves in their chosen area of competence and interest.

The overlap of educational activities in Nigeria is worrisome. There is no effort at tracking the educational activities of individuals. If anyone needs additional skill or knowledge or certification in Nigeria, the individual has to go and starts afresh like someone who never had any initial knowledge. One can recall a graduate of humanities who desired to study law had to go and sit for the entrance examination again because there is no recognition of the initial education whether it is related to the course or not. The national commission for mass education needs to create opportunity for accreditation of initial knowledge that people have had earlier to promote lifelong learning.

The most unfortunate incidence is that learners at adult education centres face so much embarrassment after leaving the centres and are left again to the rigidity of the formal school system to find their ways up. This is not to suggest that agencies of non-formal education should create parallel educational systems at every level, but there should be recognition by relevant of government agencies that would accept

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