

Review

Education and leadership: A philosophical perspective

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This paper is a philosophical investigation of the relationship which exists between two major concepts; education and leadership. Besides the examination of the major concepts, the study also embraces historical method to justify the comparison between the early leaders in Nigeria politics and their present counterparts. All reviewed literature attests to the fact that the problem is neither with education nor its policies but rather problem of leadership affects education in its duty of producing better society in Nigeria. The researcher then concludes the paper by giving an outline of possible measures to be taken to address the problem of leadership by identifying the root causes of the problem as well as exposing of a major problem hindering educational progress in Africa and Nigeria in particular, So that, other researchers could further examine the problem from different angles with the aim of discussing the way forward.

Key word: philosophical investigation, education, examination, leadership, Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Education is said to be a powerful instrument of change and development in any society where it is introduced. Researches have also confirmed that whatever changes and development intended by any society should be taught in school. These assertions are evidently supported by the United Nations Declaration on Human rights (1948) which stipulates that every child has a right to education. As stated earlier, this means that, education all over the world has been seen as a powerful instrument for the overall development.

However, education, as powerful as it is claimed to be, seems to be an instrument in the hands of government agents known as leaders or policy makers. Now, going by the policy statements on education under different names such as reform, deregulation and so on, and the actual implementation; one notices that the education as instrument of development, reforming is far from achieving the expected goal of producing worthwhile citizens and meaningful changes in our society especially in Nigeria.

This dysfunctional of education seems to have been able to raise its ugly head as result of what could be described as imminent lack of role understanding by the leadership of government. The menace under discourse manifest in various ways through which the government agents, that is, the leaders handle issues related to education. This can be felt through the school funding, infrastructures, teachers' development and welfare to

mention few.

Nevertheless, this study is not to discuss the myriad of problems facing education but rather to examine the relationship between education and leadership with the aim of discussing and dissolving the problem. Therefore, the following questions are raised and discussed as pointer to the focus of the study. Thus; the researcher asks: What is education? What is leadership? Do they have any influence on each other? How does the relationship, if any, between them, impinges upon the expected roles of the other? These and more would be dealt with in the cause of discussion.

Clarification of concepts

In the tradition of philosophy of education which does not support the idea of definition of concepts due to more complication which may further ensure, philosophers rather analyze, discuss and criticize issue with a view to open discussants' eyes to what could be commonly agreed solution to an identified problem. This is a method attributed to the father of philosophy: Socrates. In the same token, this study is going to embrace the philosophical method of enquiry. Therefore, few given definitions of the concepts would be examined to serve as framework to the object of discussion or the kernel of the study.

Education therefore, is believed to be a concept susceptible to different interpretations as long as we have scholars who see education from different perspectives. Some define education as schooling, certificate, indoctrination, initiation and so on.

Dada (1999) attributed the difficulty in giving a determinate meaning of education to the fact that the concept is a complex phenomenon which can be viewed from different view points. He opines that, some view it from functional angle; others from its aims while many see it as process. Some of these definitions shall be examined to give a general overview of the study's idea. So, Nduka (1982) as quoted by Lawal (1999) sees education as:

The process of cultural transmission of the people at least part of such culture from one generation to the next

From the definition above, we can infer that education is a process through which norms and values of a particular society could be transmitted to another generation, even generation yet unborn. In other words, education could mean a means through which continuity could be guaranteed in the society. But from critical examination the definition fails to explain the kind of norms and values to be passed across to another generation because any norms or values which do not conform to the general opinion may not survive because they are going to face stiff opposition.

In contrary to the above definition, Peters did not define, rather he offers criteria by which we can identify education and this caters for the lapses in the earlier submission. The words education is describes as:

The transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it.

Unlike the first definition which says transmission from old to new generation irrespective of the content, this definition clears issue by saying transmission of what is worthwhile. A general belief is that anything worthwhile would be accepted by majority. At any rate, we can establish from the foregoing that education involves a process of transmission of something into another person who is to benefit from such process. Stemming from their view, education is something that has to do with the development of man who lives in the world of dependency.

So, anything that has to do with man should then be carefully handled. Besides, one also thinks that any education which neglects humanity could not be worthwhile and should not be counted as education. Now, what is leadership? According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English; leadership is the position of being the leader of a group, organization, country and so on. Etymologically, leadership originates from a Greek word 'Prohistemi' which means to go before. Congruently,

Adesina (1980) defines the concept as: "A person who exercised influence over other or an individual who occupies a position of authority while he defines leader as one who speaks for others".

Going by these expositions of the concept of leadership and Education, it is observed that before education could deliver the expected duties of leading an individual from ignorance to knowing, it requires activities of good leaders at different levels. Nevertheless, the leadership that is central to this study is the one that has to do with authority and government. So, for education to eradicate ignorance, poverty and underdevelopment should be good leadership in place of authority who is actually ready to assist education to deliver.

Leadership has been categorized into three namely: autocratic, laissez faire and democratic leadership. Among these three types, democratic leadership has been underscored as the most appropriate especially when it has to do with education. For instance, according to Pale's report on leadership style as cited by Bamisaiye (1990) the finding revealed that the group members under democratic leadership displayed superior levels of initiative, freedom of action, morale, collusiveness and performance.

With autocratic leadership, people were found to be more aggressive and sometimes hostile. The group under laissez faire leadership was found to be dissatisfaction. Level of performance at work was poor and the amount was less. However, Oroka (2008) says that no literature has indicated leadership style as a problem rather it is problem of implementation especially on education in Nigeria. Ukeje (1992) substantiated this in his words, and says that; "Problem is not lack of ideas, but the will and the capacity to effectively implement the ideas".

The leadership problem as regards education as pointed out by these scholars lies in lack of political will which could be well understood under budgetary allocation to education and corruption. Before any further examples of the identified factors are given, the best approach is to go back memory lane of educational activities under the leadership of the old and new leaders in Nigeria to actually give picture of leadership influence on education.

Historical evidence of education under old and new leadership

During the first civilian administration in Nigeria before and shortly after independence, Nigeria education recorded tremendous and remarkable success. Not only this, education actually showed its prowess of eliminating ignorance and reduced poverty because virtually all who were educated then were well placed in terms of employment. In fact, the educated ones who were known as 'alakowe' serve as reference point to any erring or

Table 1. The budgetary allocation of Nigeria government between 1999 – 2007.

Year	Allocation	% of total budget
1999	₦30.66	10.7
2000	₦ 64.26	6.1
2001	₦ 74.96	5.4
2002	₦ 45.56	2.9
2003	₦ 63.56	4.9
2004	₦ 90.36	3.9
2005	₦ 106.61	3.7
2006	₦ 151.76	7.4
2007	₦ 205.26	8.0

wayward child unlike now that touts and riff raff do well and are more recognized in Nigeria than the educated. This is not unconnected with the problem of 'brain drain' in every sphere of human endeavours in Nigeria. Between 1955 - 1957, late chief Obafemi Awolowo and late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, both premiers of the Western and Eastern regions, respectively; introduced meaningful free education with the provision of necessary educational facilities like classrooms, desk and chairs, textbooks and so on. This system went on before it was truncated by military intervention through coup detat in 1966 till 1979 when the military had a break of four years before they came back in 1983.

The periods of the military rule was purely autocratic leadership, and as earlier pointed out, that was the period when education suffered neglect, mismanagement and lack of initiatives. The reason why education was been treated with such ignominy could not be ascertained, but one thinks that, it could be due to lack of proper education by the military leadership? Or is it inability to allow creativity among the technocrats? Nevertheless, between 1979 - 1983, when the military were on holiday, education also picked up a bit. That was when the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led government in the South-Western Nigeria introduced another free and qualitative education. This was abruptly terminated by another military coup in 1983 which lasted to late twentieth century in 1999 when the present democratic governance began under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo when various educational reforms were organized but with little success.

Since 1999 till date, education has been under civilian rule but unfortunately, no tangible achievement has been recorded between what happened during the early civilian rule and education, compare to what is in operation in the present dispensation. These differences could be noticed in all facets of education such as quality of education given which has been identified as fall in the standard of education. Similarly, poor educational facilities, negative attitude of leaders to teacher education and welfare among others are some of the indices of bad leadership on education.

By these anomalies, one feels that problem of education could be attributed to the leadership style which Orok (2008) discussed under budgetary allocation to education and corruption. In support of his discovery, he gives the analysis of the budgetary allocation of Federal Government of Nigeria between 1999 - 2007. It was reported that UNESCO recommended 26% of the annual budget for education in developing countries between 1970 and 2000. The Table 1 shows the budgetary allocation of Nigeria Government between 1999 – 2007

First and foremost, the Table 1 shows that the budgetary allocation fall short of what is recommended by the international education organization. Whereas, the same recommendation had been implemented in other African countries especially Ghana and we are all living witness to the enviable level of their educational sector. Secondly, findings have shown that even this meager amount released for education were further reduced before the money gets to the implementation thereby incapacitating the expectation from education in our society. Larger percentage of the budget has been diverted to other personal commitment of the government agents.

One then wonders why such problem exist, going by the personalities involve in the governance of this country, where many supposedly highly educated Nigerians form cabinet of the three arms of government. Can we say lack of education affects their administrative style because this is not uncommon to the way illiterates handle issues. But the question is answered by Adesina (2008) who reported his encounter with a Hong Kong based Chinese business man who once worked in Nigeria and described our system of administration, thus: "The problem has nothing to do with knowledge but is due to lack of physical and mental discipline". He explained physical discipline as greed: too much pleasure for less work, glory seeking without honour, power without responsibility, self over community while mental discipline was described as lack of conviction; inability to stick to an idea or belief reckless paradigm shift; and our leaders' inability to govern by noble values.

By these indices, education seems to have been badly affected by the leadership problem through the leadership of all major stakeholders in the educational industry most especially those vested with power of policy formulation and implementations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Obviously, a nexus exists between education and leadership and this unison has been identified as a major problem hindering the ability of education to prove its worth especially in Nigeria. The study shows that rather than for the country to progress as a result of the acclaimed commitment to educational advancement, reverse was the case while this failure is traceable to leadership problem.

The identified problem was further confirmed by the

historical difference of the early and the latter day leaderships. While the leaders yesterday were visionary and dedicated to the development of their fathers land, today's leaders are egocentric both in theory and practice and this is accounted for much moribund execution of educational programmed put in place.

At any rate, the following suggestions could assist to put our educational system into proper shape, if they could be considered for implementation. As pointed out in the course of study our leaders should desist from incessant changes in educational system. For instance, in Nigeria school system changed from former elementary school known as standard 1 - 6 to primary 1 - 6 and later to 1 - 9 years Universal Basic Education. If the country had stucked to one and improve upon it, probably things could have been better than what it is. Although, change is the only permanent condition but it should be rational changes.

Besides, our leaders should try and check their greed tendency and re-appraise their mental discipline by exhibiting noble values. This last problem has radiated in our leaders to the extent that it has affected the psychology of many learners and therefore, resulted in the negative educational decisions. Some youths in Nigeria prefer to be touts than been educated due to the kind of recognition given to hooligans by Nigerian government actors.

Misplacement of priority of our leaders is another major leadership problem which had adversely affected education. For instance, teachers' welfare is jettisoned at expense of raising political hooliganism; whereas, the National Policy on Education says no nation could rise above its teacher but teacher who is a strong pillar of education as instrument of development is grossly maltreated and relegated to the background in Nigeria system. In emphasizing the importance of teacher in education business, Ukeje (1992) says: "We can possibly manage without adequate classrooms and other facilities, we can educate without books and other teaching aids, but we cannot without the teacher. He is central and *paramount in the educative process*". Corroboratively Okafor (1992) also has this to say as emphasis on the pivot roles of teacher which the leaders have politicized and defaced. In his words, he writes that:

"Effective Nigerian teacher education becomes an indispensable factor of an equation which will result in making our ablest young man and woman to acquire the critical qualities of mind, character which will enable them and the nation to meet changes of the modern world".

The scholarly submissions pointed out some of the neglected aspect of education which has resulted in poor educational system due to the attitude of leadership to what could have earn them credit rather than blame. It was also pointed out that leadership these days should appraise their system, if actually they are sincere with the aim of leading the nation to the greatest height because by juxtaposition, certain leaders who had existed before them managed the same industry with remarkable success, so theirs shouldn't be an exemption. Since leadership could not be separated from education.

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