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Education, Politics and Leadership: A Philosophical Analysis

Abigail Seth Karfe

Head of Department (HOD), Guidance and Counseling,
Faculty of Education,
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State.
abigailkarif@gmail.com
08036005162

&

Ameh Ejah

Country Model School,
Autabalefi, Karu local Government, Nasarawa State.
amehejah02@gmail.com
08069600245

Abstract

This paper critically analyzed the concepts of education, politics and leadership which are considered as sine qua non in our contemporary society. Education in any nation is an important national asset that transforms its citizens' existence and as well renovates political, cultural, social and economic activities for rapid development. Education has the foremost objective which is to establish wide knowledge in the politics and leadership institutions. Nigeria is a country affected by low investment in the area of education and its forms, politics and leadership. This has caused setback on the national growth and development. The paper examined education and denotation of education by different scholars and the stakeholders' contributions, politics and leadership philosophically and it showed that the concepts are interdependent. Analytical reviews of the concepts agreed that they are tangled and cannot be separated. Also, the relationship between politics and education and its challenges, leadership and education and its challenges were discussed. It concluded that the three concepts are educational trinity; hence, they cannot exist separately. It further recommended that leadership studies, political studies and history of education should be taught separately as subjects in the Nigeria schools system. In addition, electing or appointing leaders should be based on the intensity of education acquired, evidence of political involvement and leadership knowledge.

Key words: Education, Politics and Leadership.

Introduction

In several cases, people view education to be those academic activities contained in the curriculum content alone, whereas, education is more than that¹. It includes such things as leadership, social, economic, security, political and cultural activities where interaction always takes place. There are some activities which are not included or fully captured in the curriculum

but are part of academic that can be learned or acquired and practiced through social interaction such as leadership role and political activities which one may be opportuned to participate in. Issues such as politics, security, economics, leadership and cyber knowledge are all contemporary issues to be linked with education. So, if a nation is totally or partially ignorant of these issues or pretend to know but treat them with levity and expect a meaningful growth and development, it will be nothing but a mirage. Thomas Jefferson and Johnson, both America's scholars in Enoh² 'believed that "if a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was, and never will be" 'and no nation can be both ignorant and great". Also, Obafemi Awolowo in Enoh³ believed that, the answer to all our national problems can be reduced to one single word: "Education".

What is Education?

Education is a concept with a large volume that covers eventually every aspect of human beings. Education is an ancient concept that existed under the planet earth and that is why the process of analyzing the concept is difficult. According to R.S. Peters⁴, "the task of defining education is extremely difficult". It is because of its "difficult nature" that Peters said that "education is a concept which is not very close to the ground; By this statement, education is quiet complex. Also, philosophy of education does not agree with scholars focusing on the definition of concepts due to impediment that may come up. However, the task of analyzing the concept of education in relation to other concepts such as politics and leadership is quite heavy.

According to Socrates, education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man⁵. Aristotle, viewed education as the process of training man to fulfill his aim by exercising all the faculties to the fullest as a member of society⁶. M.J. Langeveld;⁷defined education as every interaction that happens in every association that occurs between adults with children in a field or state where the educational work is in progress.

Sir Ahmadu Bello, in Enoh⁸ defined "education as spiritual and cultural transmission of inherited tradition, the purpose of education is mainly intellectual and moral discipline as well as transmitting the inherited aspect of our culture to all who come to school". The definitions above, all agreed to the fact that education is a necessity and therefore, it is necessary to be spread and transfered from one generation to another. Education should not be caged or restricted; rather it should be free for everyone to have easy access to it, be it formal, informal or non-formal education. In a different view, R.S. Peters, did not define education but gave the criteria by which someone can identify education⁹.

Any time we are privileged to discuss the concept of education; we must remember to acknowledge the efforts and the successes recorded by our indigenous curriculum contents designers. These curriculum contents were ideas of some of the educational thinkers such as Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, Tai Solar0in, Onyerisara Ukeje, Aliu Fafunwa and Jibrin Aminu to mention but few. For the purpose of identifying these Nigerian educators, the criteria of a great educator put forward by R. R. Rusk in Enoh¹⁰ will be adopted. These criteria include contributions to theories or new emphasis to the process of education;

novelty of ideas, finding a place where their work must have emerged effectively in practice and continuity or relevance of ideas for a notable period.

Education is any activity that controls ignorance and proffers solution to problems. This means that education is a process that takes place in one's entire life time. In line with these facts, education is regarded as the process of facilitating learning and obtaining knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. To acquire education demands a lot of due processes which the scholars and the experts called educational methods that include training, teaching, storytelling, discussion, role play, co-operative learning, dialogues, experiential learning, brainstorming, peer peace teaching and dramatic activities. All these take place under the supervision and guidance of an educator or the teacher.

Education could be formal, informal or non-formal. Formal education refers to the intentional system that runs its activities with classes starting or beginning from kindergarten, nursery, primary, secondary, college of education, polytechnic and university with special and organized programs for technical and professional training.

Informal education refers to the unintentional lifelong process activities where skills attitudes, values, tradition, beliefs and culture are acquired through daily experience and social interaction in the environment. Non-formal education refers to any intentional, voluntary and planned programmed of an individual that is aimed at developing skills and competencies for a social and democratic life. It includes activities like summer camps activities, leisure center activities and social activities.

Therefore, no generation has ever existed without some form of education. Nigeria as a nation has experienced all these forms of education as stated above. However, a careful study shows that education keeps on changing from one form to another, based on the period of time ranging from the ancient times to middle ages and to civilization time and to the digital world in the 21st century. Also, at every stage of education, opprobrium was inevitable. Educational opprobrium or reprehension could come from the parents, the learners and the schools and even the government.

Most parents spent their times running their businesses, attending political meetings, marriage and burial ceremonies among others, whereas they failed to give quality interaction to their children and to educate them. Children are left at the mercy of their aunty or uncle who has nothing reasonable and meaningful to contribute to their education and upbringing rather than maltreating the children on daily basis.

Most students or learners at all levels of education have not really discovered their reason for learning or why they are in school and as a result, many of them involve themselves in social vices and other criminal activities capable of destroying their career and destiny as well as tarnishing the good images of the institution. Many Nigerian students have lost their lives due to riot master-minded by cult groups. Many institutions have lost valuable materials and schools closed down for months making some students to become public nuisance.

Nigerian government has failed in many ways in the area of educational policies. Nigeria had had intermittent policies on education. Several occasions, the ministry of education will make

policy aimed at moving education forward but partial implementation and failure will be recorded at the end because of lack of thorough inspection and supervision.

Some Stakeholders of Education and Their Contributions

In education, the word “stakeholder” means anyone or somebody who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, administrators, teachers, other staff members, parents, families, school board members, community members, school councilors and state representatives. Part of the successes recorded so far in the educational sector in Nigeria can be attributed to the immense efforts of the stakeholders. Both internal and external stakeholders are concerned about the quality of education in Nigeria. They are concerned about the quality of education Nigerian students receive from schools, the quality of teachers employed to teach the students and learners, the quality of infrastructures in schools and the instructional materials used by the teachers in schools. Educational stakeholders are grouped to include internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those within the sector or schools or government which include the administrators, the teachers or academic staff, students and non academic staff. The external stakeholders are those outside the sector or schools which include the parents, private individuals, trade unions, agencies, firms or companies, industries, alumni association etc

Roles of some of the stakeholders in Nigerian education

Internal stakeholders

Administrators or educational Administrators: Administrators are persons who work in schools, but not classroom teachers. An educational administrator is a person who oversees the day to day functions in schools. They are chief executive officers responsible for overseeing the administrative duties in schools from kindergarten through post graduate levels. They directly supervise all instructional staff, communicate with students to check on their progress and ensure that the overall school processes run smoothly.

Teacher: A teacher is a qualified person or individual who provides education to students or learners. A teacher makes adequate plans aimed at making students’ effective learning experiences, arouse students’ interest to learn and work hard to become creative in solving problems. Teachers are actively involved in the daily delivery of school’s curriculum and meeting of its set target and goals.

Students: Students are persons or people studying in schools or any other places where learning takes place. A student is someone who attends an educational institution. Students are learners and as well as customers in the educational institutions labouring and working very hard to become better academically. Students also place their role in the decision making process in educational institutions or schools.

Non Academic staff: Non academic staff are those people that do not have an academic employment and functions but carry out any other duties assigned to them in schools or any academic institutions.

External stakeholders

Parents: Parents are considered as one of the strong stakeholders of schools and educational institutions. Parents' contributions to education in Nigeria are quite commendable over the years. Parents make their children regular customers to schools and other academic institutions. Their contributions help in boosting the improvement of quality of education nationwide. Parents ensure that their children are provided with the latest academic innovation and materials needed for their children's academic excellence. Parents ensure that provisions are made for their children in school in terms of food, shelter, clothes and payment of school fees and others to ensure their children focus on studies and desist from doing negative things or joining bad gang.

Nongovernmental organizations: It is true that schools, academic institutions and education sector development have greatly been achieved through collective efforts of nongovernmental organizations in Nigeria. Many of the organizations ensure that the quality of education, quality of teaching and learning step up to meet the world class standard and they are committed to that over the years. Some of the organizations are engaged in building blocks of classrooms in schools across Nigeria and through donations of academic materials and funds.

Tertiary Educational Trust Fund (TETFUND): Tertiary Educational Trust Fund is an intervention agency set up in 1993 to recover and provide auxiliary support to all levels of public institutions with the foremost purpose of funding alongside project management for the rehabilitation, restoration and consolidation of education in Nigeria. This agency has been mandated with the general improvement of education in the following areas;

- a. Essential physical infrastructure for teaching and learning,
- b. Institutional materials and equipments,
- c. Research and publications,
- d. Academic staff training and development and others.

Government: In Nigeria the government is the foremost source of educational funding. Government ensures that schools or education sector receive relevant funding strategy to establish proper funding and ensure current curriculum is implemented as at when due. The government carries out other important roles such as supervision, monitoring, promotion, employment, research, approval and upgrading schools and institutions among others.

Politics:

Looking at the origin of politics, education is one of the key tools used by the politicians and the bourgeois for the betterment of their functions, actions and the control of the machinery of government and administration. Critical studies show that administration and organization of education are closely associated with political activities and functions. According to Uchendu¹¹, educational system and politics are symbiotically linked. The Federal Government of Nigeria states that education in Nigeria is an instrument for effective development¹². Supporting national policy on education was the educational goals clearly set out in terms of its relevance to the needs of the society and the country at large. Nigeria as a country clearly spells out the philosophy and objectives of her education which is affected by the political will

and aspiration of the country. Reliable and progressive democratic government must promote free and equal education for all so that through education sustainable development can be achieved by all. Anuna in Tolutope and Hauwa, defined education as the systematic socialization of the younger members of the society into learning about the religion, morals, beliefs and feelings of nationality and collective opinion of all kinds¹³. Politics has never been successful anywhere without education as a backbone which triggers the political activities in a country.

Okunamiri, defined politics as unbridled struggle for power among individuals or groups¹⁴. Uchendu, defined politics as a science and art of security in advancing the temporal welfare of community organized as a state¹⁵. By views, politics is concerned with the relations of the members of community between themselves and their activities with the world¹⁶. It is concerned with the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens to each other and to the state which cannot be effectively done without proper education. The highest involvement and interaction between politics and education in the life of any given nation guarantee the objective of nation building and development.

The relationship between politics and education requires that people should make themselves available to join government to improve their education, politics, economic, social and cultural conditions. It is concerned with the national or community needs such as needs for equal education for all, political stability, free society and equal opportunity for all, egalitarian society and free democratic society.

In another view, Obanya, perceived politics and education as interaction in the fullest and best sense for stimulation of the desire for better things and urge to attain such better things¹⁷. A very healthy interaction of politics and education can hatch into producing reliable local and international leadership among people as well as bringing into people sense of citizenship and consciousness. It is very important to maintain a platonic interaction between politics and education in order to encourage and motivate people to self-reliant society with the aim of producing good and reliable leadership among citizens of Nigeria. Historically, political system has influenced educational system and policies over a couple of decade even during the period of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle respectively. Rowley, submitted that “education plans are political in their nature and effect”¹⁸.

Also, Adesina, stated that “there is hardly any problem marrying politics with education”¹⁹. He further stated that in analyzing politics, the national aim of making education available to every child, the idea of making education available to wipe out hunger, illiteracy, ignorance and diseases are on the whole less educational than political²⁰. There is a general conception that the success or failure of any educational system depends on the political system of that nation or country. Education cannot be separated from politics because they are co-joined.

Leadership:

Historically, leadership started from the early times of life and reality, right from the biblical days of Adam, Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon to mention but few. During the exiled period of Israel in Egypt, Moses was made to lead his people. Several theories opined that leaders are born while other series of researches believed that many different opinions such as

personal abilities, academic and professional qualification, exposure, even expenses could make someone to acquire leadership but may not be qualified and well behaved. Leadership is not ascribed to schools alone but in government, organizations, army, business, family, etc. In fact, anywhere people work in groups, the leadership functions come into view or emergence.

Leadership exists at various levels of venture. These include the school, the church, the village or community, the age group and amongst animals, organizations, countries and the entire world leaders²¹. The better way of understanding what leadership is to view it at the individual willingness to commit himself to responsibility, accountability, honesty, transparency and accessibility. Leadership skills involve being able to instill in others the same mindset and attribute yourself for the task. This make leaders to take a full charge and responsibility to contribute their best towards achieving the goals that are expected of them by the followers. This is the reason many schools have different views on the definition of leadership.

Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization²². Leadership is the act of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal²³. Leadership involves making sound and sometimes difficult decision, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals.

However, the concept of leadership has been viewed and interpreted by many scholars. Mathison in Tolutope and Muhammed²⁴, defined leadership as a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve common goals. Gunu in Tulutope and Muhammed²⁵, defined leadership as a dynamic process in a group to contribute voluntary to the achievement of the group tasks. Leadership in education, particularly in school or institution is the process of guiding the learners by coaching them toward achieving the target goal. It involves effective supervision on the teachers and the learners to ensure that teachers teach the learners according to the planned curriculum, through regular evaluation on both teachers and the learners.

According to Ken Lindblom, in Tolutope and Muhammed²⁶, leadership in education means always keeping the learning of the students as the goal. It means keeping up on the latest knowledge in teaching, motivating, content and organizational theory. It means providing a professional content that allows and obligates teachers to do what they know is best for their students' learning. It means as a leader, one must do everything possible to support teachers to have everything they need to do their jobs effectively. Leadership has been categorized into the following groups namely:

Democratic leadership: This type of leadership recognizes respects and accepts all social interactions in the institution or organization. This type of leader allows the members to express themselves freely, their desires, positive and negative criticisms and works towards the need satisfaction. Decision making is shared by all the members including the leader himself also, praises are given for good performance where necessary. The leader seeks the opinions of other members before taking some decision but where the situation forces him to take decision without involving others, reasons and explanations are given at the end.

Charismatic leadership: This type of leader uses his or her communication skills ability, persuasiveness and influence on others. The leader believes more in himself or herself than in the followers. A charismatic leader carries great task and needs serious commitment from the followers. He injects huge energies on the followers because of his driving forces on others e.g. Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, etc.

Free sovereignty leadership: Free sovereignty leadership is the type of leader that is full of indecision and carefree in his assignment. Here, the leader has no confidence in his ability and capacity. Bass in Tolutope and Muhammed²⁷ described free sovereignty leader as a leader who leaves his or her colleagues to get on with work. This type of leader abandons his responsibility and avoids making decisions. Here productive team work and corporation are completely low.

Situational leadership: This type of leadership is based upon the establishment and in different situations which may warrant different types of leaders. Here, situations or circumstances determine the administration or action of the leader.

Insincere democratic leadership: This type of leader is known for pretence. Insincere democratic leader always presents himself to be fully democratic but in reality, he is directly an oppressive or autocratic leader. He uses cunning and stylish ways to deceive his subordinates or people. He gives out responsibilities to people particularly his subordinates but with limited powers to carry out those responsibilities. The authority and resources to carry out those delegated responsibilities or assignments effectively are held back or withheld by him. He always seeks for opinion and meaningful ideas from his subordinates but never uses them.

Relationship between Education and Politics and its Challenges

Education and politics are intertwined with high degree of friendship and harmony. Education is an agent which teaches politics and enlightens the public on political activities and political affairs with the aim of preparing the minds of people into politics with conviction. Funding of education is done by the government which is one of the primary functions of government. Educational institutions or schools receive fees from students or the learners and pay revenues to the government. Both education and politics are like the two hands that cannot do without washing each other and rubbing on each other. The moment the educational institutions produce intellectuals and those intellectuals go into politics the political institutions become stable and efficient. The opposite leads to unstable politics and confusion. Another area where both education and politics share good relationship is the home. Education starts at home which is informal education and the same home is an agent of socialization which promotes politics, norms and ideologies of the society through education. As opined by Almond and Coleman Okwori and Ede, the family, the church, community, school, work group, voluntary organizations, media of communication, political parties and government institutions are among the agents of socialization within the primary and secondary structures, through later or manifest procedures that give the individual the pre-political citizenship education or experience²⁸. Another area where educational institutions and government are deeply involved with shared responsibilities is security. Educational institutions and government are mindful of protection of lives and properties. Schools management makes sure that the school premises are well secured with fences and gates as well as government offices. This became a concerned issue; especially in recent years in Nigeria. The Northern area of Nigeria had had several

experiences and many cases of insecurity, the abduction of school students especially girls. The Chibok girls, Baptist School students' abduction, the abduction of the university students, banditry, killing students and kidnapping of university lecturers to mention but few are typical examples. These made the strong cordial relationship between educational institutions and government in the recent times. Government has made several policies on revival mission particularly in the northern part of Nigeria. Schools authority also made tireless efforts on how to fortify their environment and as well as protecting the lives of their students by building strong security forces at school gates in its environs.

Relationship between Education and Leadership and its Challenges

The truth is that education has recorded great successes since the colonial and post colonial era. One has to be bold to say this because we are not where we were since independence. Various leaders in Nigeria have shown a lot of commitment to education in times past which has yielded results by eradicating ignorance and illiteracy to some extent and improved employment, empowerment and entrepreneurship skills in the country. However, education had had challenges over the years particularly meager funding of education which could be traceable to leadership style as opined by Oroka, as reflected in budgetary allocation to education²⁹. It was reported that many times the government of Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education falls below the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation. Still with the low financial allocation to education, corruption and misappropriation creep in, thereby subjecting the sector to perform below the world class standard. By this, education has been on a stagger movement with intermittent policies due to the mindset of the past and present leaders in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Education is concerned with knowledge; politics is concerned with governance and leadership is concerned with direction. None of these concepts can operate in a vacuum; it must be dependent on each other to function effectively. Better harmony of education, politics and leadership enhances sustainable growth and development in the society. Collectively, they proffer solutions to the problems emanating from the society. A good and healthy interaction between these concepts can bring rapid development in all sectors of human venture. They cannot be separated because they are educational trinity which influence one another, have lasting impacts on one another.

Recommendations

The three concepts put together have a great significance in a nation building and should be learned and practiced at our lower schools system through learning by doing. Also, government should allow the curriculum planners to include leadership studies, political studies and history of education as separate subjects to be taught at all levels of education in Nigeria. Government should place better emphasis on a well, educated, trained and better leader rather than promoting and respecting individual popularity and fame, since, to become a better and reliable leader requires education and training of one's mind and character. More so, emphasis and awareness should be given to the public to ensure that the harmony among three concepts is put into practice anywhere and at anytime. Furthermore, if security studies should be offered and taught as a subject along with leadership studies, political studies and history of education.

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