

# **PHILOSOPHY, QUALITY AND EDUCATION**

By

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## **Abstract**

Philosophy as the queen of the sciences investigates into every science in order to explain, guide and direct each science to understand its subject matter, object, scope, limits, and prescription of appropriate method of investigation of its field of enquiry. These functions of philosophy extend to education in all its ramification. Education cannot understand itself without philosophy. In examining quality and outcome of education, philosophy is needed to overcome the error of over-generalization and error of particularity. The questions to guide this research are: 1.What is quality education? 2. What is education outcome? What are the relationship between quality education and education outcome? Philosophical methods of critical analysis, judgment and justification are implored in this work. The researcher believes that quality education is not just a function of one factor but multifaceted factors. Education outcome is simply the end product of all factors involved in the modelling of quality education. Key words are: Philosophy, Quality, and Education

## **Introduction**

The question concerning quality and outcome of education has been a perennial one. Many societies have delved into promotion of quality education with the aim of getting reasonable education outcome but did not succeed. The race for which nation of the World provides the most quality education is still ongoing. Assessors use school rating scales and tertiary education rating scales to predict bet schools and best universities across the world. These rating scales may have passed validity and reliability tests depending on the parameters used, the cultural background, the milieu or generation of students, the subjects of research, national philosophy of education and government policy. Thus, the determination of quality education through school rating is like viewing reality through a tinted binoculars. The 21<sup>st</sup> century parents are particularly concerned with the quality of school their children attend. More often than not the determinant for the quality of school is on the ability for the school, not is students, to pass national exams like West African Certificate Examination (W.A.E,C), National Examination Council Organization (NECO), and Joint University Matriculation Examination Board (JAMB). The over-emphasis on passing regional or national exams has led to oversight about what actually consists of quality and outcome of education. School proprietors seeing this curiosity and excessive concern of parents for their children to pass exams simply focus on passing the children in order to retain the patronage of the parents over

and above real education quality and outcome. This scenario has given birth to miracle examination centers. Schools that produce miracle centered results for students becomes a yardstick for measuring quality education and high performing outcome. The obsession for high performance in exams cannot be tagged as quality education outcome. Instead, it is the crippling of education through corruption. The model of reward every effort made by students under the policy of let no child be left behind is another extreme level of right hand liberty which waters down quality under the umbrella of freedom and quantity. This model demands lowering the bar for assessment and reduction of difficulty index of test blueprints in order to obtain high performing students.

The factor of examination malpractice poses a problem in the assessment of quality education and education outcome as grades obtained in exams no longer indicate intellectual achievement of a student but the ability to cheat in exams. The so called products of highly rated schools turn out to be unable to defend the grades the claim to have scored. Buttressing more, one cannot ignore other militating factors on the way to quality education outcome. These include but not limited to basic student's needs like light, food, shelter, clothing, school security, infrastructure, funding, quality of staff, teacher-student ratio, flip and non-flip classroom teaching, values, municipal facilities, and conducive environment. Quality education outcome cannot be adequately considered without mentioning educational processes which depicts balanced education, capacity building, outside classroom application of gains of education. This the trust of Nigeria's Philosophy of education as captured in the document on National Philosophy of Education (2004, P.2, section.1, No.3e): *Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional, and relevant to the needs of the society*. It is one thing to formulate policies and another thing is implementation of policies.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The understanding of what quality in education constitutes is one of the problems that confronts one in the face. There is no unified and accepted definition of quality education. The word quality on itself has a number of philosophical nuisances which tend to mystify and cloud the concept from any simplified understanding and usage. There is further the problem of lack of fundamental theory of quality education. The myriad of conjecturing of ideas on attempts to develop theories of quality education introduces multiple confusion in working out an operational theory of quality in education and application of such theories to resolve problems in the areas of quality education. The gap between local content and global content poses another problem in the understanding of quality education and this problem permeates the whole edifice of business of education industry. It affects not only content, but also outcome, national philosophy of education, national goals, and physical environments.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The Hebrew word *Kwelede* is used to translate the English word quality, and it means nature, character of a thing or person. It refers also to peculiarity, level, virtue and merit. The Greek language introduces further nuances of meaning to the concept quality. The Greek word for quality is *poiotita* which means among others capacity, property, nature, faculty, and rating. This concept *poioteshares* root with the verb *poioein* which means to make or create. This

gives clue to the fact that quality though can inher in nature but can also be enhanced or created by humans. The concept quality is said to have been originated as a French word in 13<sup>th</sup> century.

In Latin, the word *qualitas* is used to translate the French word *qualite* and means among others-state, condition, and disposition. This etymological excursus reveals that the concept quality means not only external aspect of an object or subject but also its intrinsic character, nature and disposition of inner state. This means for purposes of this research that quality of education can refer to its external aspects and internal aspects of education like education processes. Quality of education can be inherent in education but can also be human enhanced, created and innovated.

Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy explains equality within the context of logic or metaphysics concept of property. *Properties are attributes or characteristics, universals that may belong to one or many things at the same time. Properties have extensions, that is, class of things which they belong, which may be empty* (Blackburn, Simon, 2008, p.294). Quality as property of a subject, substance, object or thing need to be understood within context. There are primary and secondary properties. Primary properties are characteristics which inhere in subjects or objects like size, shape, height, weight etc. These are measurable characteristics. There are secondary properties which can exist independently of objects in which they are found such as colour, beauty, goodness, quality, excellence. These properties are not prerogative any known subject or object. These are classified as universals. Quality education is to apply a secondary property (Quality), a universal education, a property which can also be applied to a number of class of subjects and objects as quality school, quality book, quality assessment, etc. the implication if that to validly attribute such universal to education, there should criteria set apart on which to establish the reality of such attribute, otherwise the concept quality education is empty. Quality as a concept is used to make a distinction or comparing between two quantifiable entities that one of which can be said to be of higher quality than the other. In the concepts quality education, there are not other quantifiable entity being referred to or compared to education. Thus, quality education is an attribute which is product of reflection of the human mind and understanding of the state of affairs in education. It can therefore be said to be a kind of value judgment especially when there are no established criteria and data on which to base judgment.

In the view of Robert Pirsig, term quality can be understood in A. Neutral sense as the sum total of properties of object, system or process, B. evaluates the quality of all properties of an object, system or process, C. evaluates the individual values preceding the action and its results with regard to points a) and b), quality is the designation of perceptible state of systems and their characteristics which is defined in this state in a certain period of time based on certain properties of system. Robert Pirsig (1974)

Plato's conception of quality is that quality is the property of objects per se. this means that quality is that which belongs to each object in itself. This suggests that each object has its own peculiar qualities which may not be transferable or shared with others. Thus, as objects are so are their qualities. Plato identified four qualities as wisdom, courage, moderation and justice.

Quality education outcome from Plato's perspective means producing specific and distinct perfections according to the very nature of each student in addition to wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. A quality product of education must make the passage from knowledge to wisdom, must stand his or her ground in the face of changes, chances and difficulties of life, must be moderate to balance pain and pleasure and ready to defend his own right and right of others. The question is do institutions nationally and globally produce such products in school?

Aristotle discusses the term quality within the context of substances. Substance is that which is not predicable of a subject or present in a subject, example, is the term man which can be used to designate individual man or used generically to designate humanity. The term quality is used to determine degrees of excellence, perfection or worth. In other words, it is a comparative term. Speaking of quality of whiteness means the degree of more-white or less white of an object. According to Aristotle, quality is said to subsist, in a thing in varying degrees and at different times (Aristotle, 2001, P.12). Aristotle clearly holds that quality is a *hylomorphic formal attributes of substances*. This means that quality is a product of matter and form of objects. Quality is not judged only by matter like shape, size, weight etc or the internal constitutions of objects of objects but by both.

In relation to education, there is no consensus among experts on a precise definition of quality in education. This is simply because of the richness and fluid nature of the concept of quality. Quality education has erroneously been conceived as effective, efficient, functional, education that works among some circles. The question remains what in fact constitute effective, efficient or functional education that can account for quality. Is quality in education, a matter of one big factor or a number of factors to account for quality education. UNICEF rather adopted multi-dimensional concept of quality in education: According to UNICEF (2000, P.5) Quality education includes:

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skill, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
- Processes through which trained teachers, use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed class rooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;
- Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

The implications of the above definitions are that quality in education has five dimensions. In order to achieve quality education, there must be quality learners, quality environment for learning, quality content, quality processes, and quality outcome. The definition stresses aligning education to National goals and education that impacts positively on the society as

sine-qua-non for quality education. Thus, there is no one factor responsible for quality education. This is because education is a system and exists within a macro-system. Quality cannot be achieved without the macro-system, micro-systems, sub-systems, units, parts of units and individuals actively making quality impacts in their areas of operation. Another noteworthy implication of UNICEF conception of quality education is its thrust towards science-based understanding of quality education. With the delineation of five dimensions of quality education, the foundation has been laid for a construction of five dimensional quality education test instrument which can be used to generate data and a relevant statistical tool can be used to analyze data and obtain results. With this definition, quality education in schools, nation, region, and globe can be measured and objective results ascertained.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theory is a validated postulation put forward by experts in a field of knowledge in order to resolve problems emanating from that field of enquiry. Accordingly, there are theoretical positions to help in resolution of problems associated with quality education. The nature of quality in education is such that theories of quality education focus on a number of factors to be considered in reference to quality. In relation to teacher education quality, Paul Adams (2020) puts forward the theory that quality of programs are determined by the knowledge and skills student teachers demonstrate. The emphasis in quality of teacher is an epistemic factor; while ontological dimensions of quality are bracketed. Quality of teacher must look at: Identifying teaching, doing teaching, knowing teaching. Quality of teacher theory as a construct of quality education needs to should be tailored to measureable bits like: cognitive expertise, ethical expertise, communication skills, social behavior, and adjustment skills.

System theory of quality education deserves to be considered (Barile and Polese, 2010) This theory simply means that all constituent parts of education system play vital role in establishment of quality education of that system of education. This implies that in searching for quality education, one should not look at only one part of system of education like teaching, environment, instructional method, feedback or outcome as core of quality education. Instead, quality education lies in the synergy between all the parts, units, sub-units, divisions and subdivisions, regions, different levels of education and organogram making up the system. System theory is based not just on interaction of the parts but also on functional effectiveness of each parts of a system to fulfil its function as at when due. In this way, the system is able to achieve its set goal.

Discussion of educational theories of quality education demands a consideration of General Educational Theory. This theory is about the efforts of people involved in education industry and even the public who are concerned about how to resolve educational problems like the problem of quality education. These people proffer general solutions to educational problems before them. These solutions may lack adequate insight because of its difficulty in practical application and because of lack technical know-how about quality education. These general theories of quality education can be regarded as bold theorizing. This type of theory is evident in the view that to achieve quality education, the ministry of education should set high cut-off

marks for admission into high education. Unfortunately high score is not the only determinant of quality education.

Sociological educational theory of quality education focuses on analysis of social institutions that provide education. Education quality is considered from the perspectives of legitimacy and illegitimacy, approved or not approved, private or public, abroad or not abroad and on long standing performance of the school. No- professional philosophers think that this is, however, not true. School organization and environment qualify a school for high quality education. The name of a school might be very compelling and good but does not translate to quality education in such school. At times, the motto and vision of the school can predicate quality education but in reality, it does not.

Philosophical theories of quality education considers quality education from process approach and product approach. The process approach considers the quality of educational processes involved to achieve a set educational goal. Each step in the process is important for quality goal realization. There should be well articulated aim of education. The aim of education provided matrix for educational objectives. It is the aim of a system of education that serves as a pivot for every other step in the process of education and sets the parameters for the type of goal achievement. Along the processes for achievement of quality education are the curriculum, teaching methods, instructional materials, actual teaching, teacher-student ratio, evaluation, feedback and follow up. Any slack in any step of the process vitiates the realization of set goals of the educational system. The issue of quality education is not just settled with only consideration of the process, but also the product. The product of any education system is eloquent testimony of the quality of such educational system. The product serves as practical demonstration of quality education in practice. Product as final end of education system serves as insight into quality of education offered by a system. A good quality education produces sound products worthy in character and learning. Quality education produces quality products who are experts in their epistemic standing and ethical/moral expertise. Quality products display uncommon communication skills, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, collaboration and love for continuous learning. Quality products are creative and job creators.

UNESCO postulates that Quality education specifically entails issues such as appropriate skills development, gender parity, provision of relevant school infrastructure, equipment, educational material, and resources, scholarships or teaching force.

Ulf-Daniel Ehlers (2017), there is no fundamental theory of quality in education. There is need for a fundamental concept of quality in education. What exists as understanding of quality are debates, arguments, individual convictions and suggestions as what ought to be or not to be considered as quality in educational system and quality pedagogy.

### **Discussion of problems of Quality Education**

Education itself is neither a subject nor object, but can also be understood as one of universal categories; since it does not exist in se but can be exhibited by a subject who has acquired it. Any discussion about quality education becomes a discussion about subjects who have

acquired education or products of schools, home schooling,, organizations and societies where education is transferred from one person to another or one generation to another. In other words, the fact of quality may not be necessarily found in education but insources and processes of education. Every education is based on cultural context. Any form of quality of a culture is what is to be reproduced in its educational system. When there is a clash between local culture and global culture in education where should the pendulum tit-towards to grantee quality. Thus, there is the need first and fore most to work a universal culture or fashion out a multicultural model on which to base education so that there can be a consensus among nations on what constitutes quality education. It cannot be quality education when the Western nations content of education insist on teaching sex in schools, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer sexual orientation, promotion abortion and other population control orientations in schools and package same for Eastern block to whom such cultures are not only alien but taboos.

The definition of quality education by UNICEF indicates that to achieve quality education is capital intensive. Nations must be ready to set outside 25% of its annual budget for the implementation of education programs across all levels of education in the nation. This feat is not likely to be achieved by nations that hardly set out 10% of its annual budget for education for the past two decades. Nations like Nigeria whose annual budget for education has been between 5-6 percent for the 8 years. The worst scenario is that the said is still under the control of government and not directly administered by educators. This is why the hope of quality education for nations like Nigeria a dream of flying elephant.

Available literature indicates that a good effort is been exerted in the area of working out theories of quality in teaching, in content development, in equality etcetra, but few postulation of theory in quality education. There is theoretical gap in the knowledge and practice of quality education. Paul Adams postulates quality of teachers as epistemic based but contends that such understanding of quality of teachers lack ontological foundation. Thus, a consideration of theory of quality of teacher should not only be based on knowledge but on doing and being of the teacher. On the contrary, UNICEF does not emphasize quality of teacher but conceives teachers as part of the processes of education. This means that discussing theories of quality education, the emphases should not be on quality of teachers but on quality of educational processes. This is a statement about de-emphasizing teacher-centered education for learner-centered education as the ideal to grantee quality education. Ulf-Daniel Ehiers all together denies the existence of any fundamental theory of quality education. There is therefore a gap in literature for theories of quality education. I believe that quality education theories are implicit in the five main theories of education and needs only to be applied or made explicit. The Philosophical education theories of Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Pragmatism, Existentialism, Africanism and Social reconstructionism.

### **Educational Implications of Quality Education**

Quality education is important not only for individuals but for the nation and globe; since products of education today are global citizens who can live and work in any part of the

World. Nations of the World should work out acceptable global culture and if possible global goals which can serve as a paradigmatic model to drive education in the World and eliminate discrepancies and glitches of race, ethnic and ideological barriers which are bans to quality education. United Nations should police their education budget policy such that nations that fail to comply to setting outside 25% of its budget for education should be penalized. As corollary, freedom of educational institutions should be upheld by United Nations otherwise the hope of quality education is dashed.

Nations should promote ongoing staff development, improvement of school environments, infrastructure, and use of ICT in education. Learner centered education should be promoted and should not be understood as not disciplining derailing learners. There is no society constructed on the principle of no consequences for wrong actions that last the test of time. Quality education demands application of principles of equality, balanced approach in teaching-learning process, effective monitoring of education processes and outcomes. There should a global template for quality assurance, such that quality assurance committees know what is expected of them and pursue the task set before them rather than wondering in the dark.

The belief that quality education consists in learners obtaining high scores is erroneous. Quality outcome may include learners obtaining high scores in a teacher-made test or formative test but not restricted only to it. This is because in most nations of the World learning outcomes are based only on measuring the cognitive domain through test instruments. Other domains of lesson objectives like affective domain, psychomotor, communication, interpersonal, intrapersonal are overlooked. Thus, it is gross error to use only scores gotten from test instrument on cognitive domain alone to determine quality education. Given the claims of multiple intelligence theory, convergence and divergence learning theory, and delayed developers, it becomes daisy to base quality education only on data obtained from cognitive outcome of either formative test or teacher-made teacher.

### **Conclusion**

There is need for more reach in the area of quality education. Educators should form education support groups and advocacy groups to drive the need for quality education. Already established government groups like quality assurances, examination malpractice committees, should be encouraged with necessary tools to discharge their duties effectively. The reasons for decline of interest in learning among developing nations is due to lack of quality education especially education without skill development which does not offer employment to products of such education. Any quality education should take serious the connection between education and employability. In any ways, skill development is a key word in quality education.

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