

TRCN

PhD Study Material

on

PQE 002: *Philosophy of Education*

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Concept of Philosophy of Education

The philosophy of education explores the foundational beliefs and values that shape educational systems, practices, and policies. These philosophical ideas arise from historical and cultural contexts, influencing how societies perceive the purpose, content, and methods of education.

In Nigeria, a combination of indigenous, colonial, and global philosophical ideas shapes the philosophy of education.

Understanding these philosophical underpinnings is essential for addressing current educational challenges and proposing remedies that align with Nigeria's context and aspirations.

Basic Philosophical Thoughts in Education

Several philosophical schools of thought have played critical roles in shaping educational development globally.

Some of the most influential include:

1. **Idealism** (*originating from philosophers like Plato*)

Idealism emphasizes the importance of ideas, the mind, and moral values in education. It advocates for a curriculum focused on intellectual and spiritual development, with teachers guiding students in the pursuit of truth and virtue.

2. **Realism** (*rooted in Aristotle's teachings*)

Realism advocates for education based on the objective reality of the world. It stresses empirical knowledge and scientific methods, encouraging students to learn through observation,

experimentation, and analysis. Education helps individuals understand the world around them.

3. **Pragmatism** (*popularized by John Dewey*)

Pragmatism promotes experiential learning and critical thinking. It views education as a dynamic process preparing individuals to solve real-world problems through practical experiences. Pragmatism greatly influences the concept of education as preparation for life.

4. **Existentialism** (*popularized by Jean-Paul Sartre*)

Existentialism focused on the individual's experience, existentialism advocates for a learner-centred approach, where students make choices and take responsibility for their learning. It emphasizes personal freedom, self-expression, and the development of authentic individuals.

5. **Perennialism and Essentialism**

These traditionalist philosophies emphasize a fixed curriculum based on classical works and enduring truths (*perennialism*) or the basic skills and knowledge needed for societal success (*essentialism*). They argue for a structured, teacher-led approach that prepares students for societal responsibilities.

6. **Progressivism**

As a response to traditional education, progressivism focuses on active learning, critical thinking, and social reform. It sees education as a tool for personal and societal improvement, encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and democratic participation in schools.

Educational Ideas and Practices from Ancient Times and Their Influence on Modern Practices

Ancient civilizations significantly influenced modern educational systems through their ideas and practices. These foundational concepts reflect societal values and needs, establishing frameworks that resonate today.

Here are key contributions from ancient times and their impacts on contemporary education:

1. **Ancient Greece**

Philosophers like *Plato* and *Aristotle* emphasized the importance of rational thought, ethics, and the pursuit of knowledge. Plato's concept of the ideal state in "*The Republic*" included education as a means to cultivate virtuous citizens and advocated for a structured curriculum that fosters critical thinking.

Socrates introduced a dialogical approach to learning, encouraging students to engage in discussions, ask questions, and seek answers collaboratively. It underpins many modern teaching strategies, promoting inquiry-based learning and critical thinking skills.

2. **Ancient Rome**

Roman education emphasized rhetoric, law, and public speaking, preparing individuals for active participation in civic life. This focus on developing effective communication skills remains a cornerstone of modern education, especially in liberal arts programs.

Formal Education Institutions: The establishment of formal schools (*ludi*) and later secondary schools (*grammaticus*) laid the groundwork for structured education systems. This tradition of formal schooling continues to shape contemporary educational practices, emphasizing standardized curricula and certification.

3. Islamic Golden Age

During the medieval period, institutions like the House of Wisdom in Baghdad and Al-Qarawiyyin University in Morocco became renowned for their scholarship. These centres promoted education across various disciplines, including science, mathematics, and philosophy, influencing the development of universities in Europe.

Islamic scholars emphasized integrating religious and secular knowledge. This approach to education continues to inspire modern educational philosophies that advocate for interdisciplinary learning.

4. Ancient China

Confucius advocated for moral and ethical education, stressing the importance of character development alongside intellectual achievement. The Confucian ideal of education as a means of personal and societal improvement influences modern values in many educational systems, particularly in East Asia.

The Chinese imperial examination system established a meritocratic approach to education and governance. This system's emphasis on standardized testing and academic achievement mirrors contemporary assessment practices worldwide.

5. Indigenous African Education

Traditional African education focused on community involvement and transmitting cultural values, skills, and knowledge through oral traditions, storytelling, and apprenticeships. This approach highlights the importance of context and relevance in education, principles increasingly recognized in modern frameworks emphasizing culturally responsive teaching.

Indigenous practices emphasized developing the whole person—intellectually, morally, and socially. This holistic approach gains traction in contemporary education, advocating for social-emotional learning and character education.

Influence on Modern Practices

Ancient educational ideas and practices have profoundly shaped modern education in various ways:

- **Curriculum Development:** Modern curricula emphasize critical thinking, ethics, and citizenship education, aiming to develop well-rounded individuals prepared for societal participation.
- **Teaching Methods:** Socratic questioning and collaborative learning strategies inform current pedagogical approaches, encouraging student engagement and active participation.
- **Formal Structures:** The establishment of formal educational institutions and standardized curricula reflects ancient practices, providing a framework for educational systems worldwide.
- **Holistic Education:** Recognizing the importance of moral, ethical, and emotional development in education aligns with

ancient philosophies advocating for a well-rounded approach to learning.

Philosophical Thoughts Underlying Nigerian Education

Nigeria's education system reflects a blend of indigenous, Islamic, Western, and global philosophical influences:

1. **Indigenous Nigerian Philosophy:** Traditional Nigerian education largely remained informal and practical, focusing on social integration, moral education, and survival skills. It emphasized communal values, respect for elders, and passing knowledge through storytelling, apprenticeship, and community involvement.
2. **Islamic Influence:** The introduction of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria in the 11th century brought a new philosophical approach based on Islamic teachings and Quranic studies. This system promoted religious values, literacy in Arabic, and integrated education with moral and religious instruction.
3. **Western Influence:** Western-style education in Nigeria, introduced by Christian missionaries in the 19th century, rooted itself in European educational philosophy, emphasizing formal schooling, literacy, and numeracy. This system prioritized individual achievement and prepared students for participation in modern economic and political systems.
4. **Contemporary Nigerian Philosophy of Education:** The National Policy on Education, shaped by Nigeria's unique context, reflects a pragmatist and humanist approach. It emphasizes self-

reliance, national unity, and the development of individuals for societal progress. Nigeria's educational philosophy aims to balance traditional values with the demands of modernization and globalization, advocating for education that is functional, inclusive, and transformative.

Appraising Nigeria's Educational Challenges and Proposing Remedies Based on Philosophical Thought

Despite the philosophical foundations of Nigerian education, the system faces several significant challenges:

1. **Inequality in Access to Education:**

Socioeconomic, regional, and gender disparities create unequal access to quality education. A pragmatic approach focusing on inclusive education, as advocated by global philosophers like Dewey, could address these inequalities.

Policies should ensure that education reaches all sections of society, particularly marginalized groups.

2. Lack of Vocational and Practical Education: Nigeria's overemphasis on theoretical knowledge results in a disconnect between education and the job market.

Drawing from realism and pragmatism, Nigeria needs to promote vocational and technical education that equips students with practical skills for employment and self-reliance.

3. Teacher Quality and Training: A shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate professional development affects education quality.

Philosophers like *Rousseau* emphasized nurturing capable teachers. Nigeria could benefit from investing in continuous teacher training and adopting learner-centred, progressive approaches to teaching.

4. **Insecurity and Conflict:**

In areas affected by conflict, particularly in Northern Nigeria, insecurity disrupts education. An existentialist approach focusing on the individual needs of students and flexible, community-based education solutions could help address challenges in conflict zones.

5. **Out-dated Curriculum:**

The Nigerian curriculum often lags behind global standards, failing to prepare students for contemporary challenges. Inspired by the progressive educational movement, reforms should emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy to align education with the demands of the 21st century.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS ON THIS TOPIC: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION (002)

1. Confucius is associated with which educational philosophy?

- A. Pragmatism
- B. Existentialism
- C. Confucian Education
- D. Idealism

2. The Confucian examination system is an example of _____

- A. Holistic education
- B. Formal assessment practices
- C. Experiential learning
- D. Moral instruction

3. Which of the following educational challenges is highlighted in Nigeria?

- A. Overqualification of teachers
- B. Outdated curriculum
- C. Excessive funding
- D. High student-to-teacher ratio

4. What is one main characteristic of traditional Nigerian education?

- A. Emphasis on individualism
- B. Focus on rote memorization
- C. Integration of community values
- D. Use of technology

5. The integration of global educational practices into Nigeria reflects what type of philosophical approach?

- A. Isolationism
- B. Pluralism
- C. Traditionalism
- D. Nationalism

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