
CONCEPTUALIZING EDUCATION AND TEACHING IN SOCIETY

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Abstract

An understanding of the concept of education, demands the application of a variety of ideas bordering on such terms which include, instruction, training and curriculum. None of these terms can be equated to the concept of education but an indication of it. Consequently, an educated fellow or individual is presumed to have acquired substantially the attributes of the identified virtues of education. The teacher in a formal classroom setting is placed in the heart of the education process and determines how it proceeds. Thus, this paper examines the concept of education and the training available for the production of a sound teacher with particular reference to Nigeria.

Introduction

A conception of education conjures-up a variety of ideas including 'instruction', 'training', 'teaching', 'curriculum', and so on. It is important to reveal that none of these terms is equitable to education. It is also essential for us to have clear ideas about what constitutes education. Schofield (1972), warns that, if we are not scrupulous in determining what is education and what is not, we may do even more social and individual harm by allowing a variety of constructing activities such as 'training', indoctrination', and 'instruction' to pass for education.

The conception of 'education' does not only possess dual connotations but is not an easy subject to define. Cooky's (1969) definition is reflected thus: Education in its everyday sense could mean formal training that is given in schools and institutions, that is, the acquisition of the ability to read, write and calculate. It could mean the specialized training that is given on the job. In a wider sense, education could mean the training of the entire person to enable him not only to be able to read and write, calculate and to be proficient in a given job, but also to enable him to fit himself for living in a society. So education could be treated as a very narrow subject relating to school and formal education or as training covering the whole of life.

However, in talking about the concept of 'education', we have so often come up at grips with the term 'educated man' that is worth-while asking ourselves what we mean when we use the term 'educated' to describe an individual. The question, therefore, arises: what will have gone through a person before we call him educated?

Characteristics of an Educated Individual

Harris (1972), has suggested that, however much the concept of 'educated' may vary from place to place, certain basic truths are implied and associated with it. Ahamibe (1979), suggests that, people have used the term 'educated' to imply various things, that when we say an individual is educated we want to be understood to mean that, whatever it is that, has happened to him is worthy of approval, is valuable or desirable. Being educated, according to Ahamibe (1979), therefore, hardly makes anyone worse; rather is more likely to improve the person. It follows that, the word 'educated' is a value word (like its parent word 'education') and when we use it to describe an individual we are expressing approval.

From the foregoing exposition of education, 'being educated' may in some contexts then mean having some considerable measure or knowledge and understanding. Ahamibe (1979), further explains that, the more usual way in which we use the expression is the narrow sense, that is, to describe anyone who has impressed us with his knowledge and understanding of the facts and situations of its world. That is the type we acquire from books, schools and colleges. This description is particularly so when such a person is able to see the connection of what he has learnt with other things, that is the place of "what he has learnt in a coherent pattern of life". The evidence, according to Ahamibe (1979), should show that the knowledge that, the educated man has acquired is not alert, but can be used when described. Again, we should expect certain levels of commendable conduct of an educated man. This means that 'being educated' is expected to include more than merely being learned and being able to use one's knowledge. On the whole, 'being educated' in the popular sense involves showing evidence of (a) knowledge and understanding, especially of the type that has to do with literacy; (b) An ability to use such knowledge; and also (c) An ability to reach some level of conduct which society arbitrarily sets up and expects.

When we talk about educated people, according to Ahamibe (1979), we want to be understood to depict a group or class, distinguished from their rest by some achievement they have made. This implies that, there is another group which can be described as 'un-educated', who, themselves may have made some achievements but not the type we would like to qualify as educational.

Peters (1966) prefers not to offer a definition for the question: "What is education?" Rather, he proposes, in place of definition of education three criteria for what might constitute the process of education. A criterion represents a guide, as distinct from a precise measure. By establishing three criteria, Peters (1966) is saying that, if we are in doubt whether or not a process is 'education', we can match it against our three standards and or criteria and see process is 'education', we can match it against our three standards and or criteria and see how close to their demands it comes. The three criteria which Peters (1966), put forward for education include the following:

- a. That education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it.
- b. That education must involve knowledge and understanding and some sort of 'cognitive perspective' which is not inert.
- c. That education, at least, rules out some procedures of transmission on the grounds that they lack witnessing and voluntariness on the part of the learner.

The first standard or criterion requires something to be transmitted or passed on. This, we can accept that education does pass things on from one generation to the next. When we consider what is worthwhile, we think of what is valuable; we think of 'values', 'cultures' etc and these can be transmitted or passed on.

In the second standard or criterion, the concepts 'inert' and 'cognitive perspective' are important; there is a connection between the two. 'Cognitive Perspective' demands of us 'to obtain an overall view', 'to take a broad view', 'to consider all the variables' to keep problems in perspective. Thus, 'cognitive perspective' means the ability to see all the aspects to situation'. The concept of 'inertia' implies 'dead weight'. With reference to our present situation, we can have knowledge which we understand and we can make use of such knowledge; or we can have knowledge which we cannot use, because we do not understand it. Thus, 'cognitive perspective' is linked with the term 'understanding'.

The third criterion calls for the use of 'method'. If education is to transmit or pass on knowledge from one generation to another, a 'method of handing on' must be involved. Some methods are acceptable; others are not. For example, some methods of education, such as 'instruction' and 'training' are acceptable while the process of 'indoctrination' does not match up to the third criterion of Peters (1966), because it denies the learner 'voluntaries' and 'witnessing'.

From Peter's (1966) presentation, we have become aware that education speaks of a process which transmits; it talks about the content (knowledge) of what is to be transmitted; thirdly, it talks of the criterion which provides a standard of comparison for methods of transmission.

In almost the same vein, O'Connor (1957), presents what he regards as a 'tentative' list of aims of education'. O'Connor (1957), presents the list as 'tentative' in order to avoid being dogmatic. O'Connor (1957), is not making stipulation of what the aims of education should be; rather, he is attempting to give aims in terms of general agreement. The aims given a kind of direction and framework for our thinking. They may represent things or issues which the inexperienced teacher accepts that he must do. They may represent what the experienced teacher finds himself doing without being consciously aware of striving after external aims. O'Connor's (1957), tentative list of aims of education include the following:

- a. To provide men and women with the minimum of skills necessary for them to take their place in society and to seek further knowledge.

- b. To provide men and women with vocational training that will enable them to be self-supporting.
- c. To awaken an interest in people and a taste for knowledge.
- d. To make people critical.
- e. To put people in touch with and train them to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements of mankind.

O'Connor's first aim could apply as much to education in a primitive society as in a civilized society. The second aim is not only limited to civilized society; it is also a development of the first aim. In civilized society, the skills of vocational training are so many and complex that the school becomes the agency for supplying them. The third aim emphasizes the view that education is meant to enable individuals to obtain further knowledge beyond what they receive in school. In other words, education not only requires individuals to learn but also teaches them how to learn. The fourth and the fifth aims both express definite process. The fourth aim recognizes the view that an individual in the modern society is often subjected to so much propaganda, indoctrination and persuasion that it is in his own interest that education should make him critical. This development is also in the interest of society. The fifth aim endorses the view that education in the modern society must cater for what the Greeks have branded both the 'necessary life' and the 'comfortable life'. In other words, education must be concerned with the provision of features that are over and beyond the bare necessities of life. It is important to emphasize that teachers at all levels in the educational system contribute in their different ways to the ultimate achievement of these five aims.

Education, then, is a process and it must have both a content and method. The content involves 'knowledge' and 'what is worthwhile' (including 'values'). Its method must allow the learner to understand what he is being taught.

The acceptance of criteria for education, among other things, calls for discovery of the essential characteristics of education. We have become more aware of something of what education is not. By externalizing the aims of education with the process of education must be made apparent so as to guide classroom practice for those who are concerned with its dispensation.

The Process of Education

In his book, "Ethics and Education", Peters (1966), confirms that, certain criteria are both implicit and explicit in a variety of central cases which impinge on 'education'. At the same time Peters (1966), stresses that, there is no way we can delegate these criteria when serious issues in education, as a process, are discussed. These criteria are:

- a. That 'education' implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it;
- b. That 'education' must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective which are not inert;

- c. That 'education' at least, rules out some procedures of transmission, on the ground that, they lack witnessing and voluntariness on the part of the learner.

As a process, it would be difficult to encompass the term 'education' in any precise definition. The formulation of criteria with regard to making explicit what a conception of education connotes is an attempt to expand and expatiate what binds its uses together. Education does not pick out a particular type of activity or process. Rather, it lays down criteria to what activities or processes must conform.

The normative aspect of education processes the criterion built into it that something worthwhile should be achieved. Education implies that, something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner. 'Education' is not only a 'task' word; it is also an 'achievement, but also one that, is worthwhile, taking place. It also implies that, the manner of doing should not be morally objectionable. Educational practices are those in which people try to pass on what is worthwhile as well as those in which they actually succeed in doing so.

If we specify appropriate 'aims' for education, much aims are meant to mark out specific achievements and states of mind that give content to the formal notion of 'the educated man'. A specification of some of these 'aims' might include 'a development of individual potentialities', 'a development of intellect and character', 'a development of sense of responsibility', 'a development of respect for others', a development of certain general virtues such as a sense of relevance, precision and the power to concentrate', 'a development of more specific virtues such as courage, sensitivity to others, and a sense of style'. To ask questions about the 'aims of education is therefore a way of getting people to get clear about and focus their attention on what is worthwhile achieving. Thus, whatever a teacher says he is aiming at, the formulation of his aim is an aid to making his activity more structured and coherent by isolating an aspect under which he is doing; it is, rather, a more precise specification of it.

The process of education is, rather, a more precise specification of it. The process of education cannot be equated to become vocational training. Training suggests simply, the equipping of individuals with the necessary knacks and skills for a job. However, to her is no reason why vocational training should not, also be 'education' but it conveys an impression of a pursuit of some limited extrinsic objectives. The process of education calls for much more than a mastery of a skill, or a procession of a mere know-how or knack. Education demands possession of some body of knowledge and some kind of disjointed facts. This development calls for some understanding of the 'reason why' of things. The knowledge involve the kind of commitment that comes from being on the inside of a form of thought and awareness.

'Wholeness' is often emphasized when the process of education is called into focus. 'Wholeness' implies that an individual who is subjected to a process of education is not expected to possess a very limited conception

of what he is doing. For example, such an individual could not walk at science or other given subject areas without seeing its connection with much else and, its place in a coherent pattern of life. 'Education is of the whole man' bears witness not simply to a protest against too much specialized training, but also to the conceptual connection between 'education' and seeing what is being done in a perspective that is not too limited.

The process of education subscribes to an employment of the use of variety of methods for the purpose of committing the learner to an acquirement of knowledge and understanding with reference to a given content. Whatever these methods are, they must be geared towards catering for the interests and well-being of learners.

Aims of Teacher Education

Tanner and Tanner (1980), are convinced that, the most striking aspect of Teacher Education hangs on the inevitability of a teacher's role in curriculum development. This assertion derives from the view that, all teachers are engaged in curriculum development. They make crucial decisions about what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. Tanner and Tanner (1980), also share the view that, of all of the legacies inherited from the 'new' education, particularly from 'progressivism', the most important to understand clearly is that, curriculum improvement depends on teachers being more thoughtful about their work. Thus, Dewey (1904), conceived of teacher education that was calculated to develop a thoughtful and intelligent teacher. Dewey recognized clearly that, the intellectual subservience of teachers was a central problem facing progressives in their efforts to improve the curriculum. He saw the solution of the problem in the development of teacher education which hangs and derives nourishment from professional work. Thus Dewey (1904:27-28), considers that, prospective teachers should be given to understand that, they not only are permitted to act on their own initiative, but that they are expected to do so, and that their ability to take hold of a situation for themselves would be a more important factor in judging them than their following any particular set method or scheme.

Tanner and Tanner (1980), continue to remind us that throughout the twentieth century we have learned repeatedly that, in the last analysis, there is no substitute for the intelligent participation of the teacher in curriculum improvement if we are to subscribe to an enhancement of teacher education. Thus, Tanner and Tanner (1980), share the view that teacher education has much to derive from the professional model envisaged by Dewey in the first decade of the twentieth century. This development has to begin with helping teachers grow in personal insight and initiative. The approach calls for a development model of teacher education. Thus, teacher education largely derives its basis from curriculum development which in itself rests not only on teacher development but also on the professionalism of the teacher. Since most teachers want to do well (Tanner and Tanner, 1980:624), stated

that the aims of teacher education are considered under the following broad headings namely:

- a. Professional and Curriculum Development vis-à-vis Teacher Education;
- b. The Role of teacher centers in relationship to the professional growth of teachers;
- c. Levels of teachers' professional performance built into curriculum development.
- d. Approved practices built into teacher education;
- e. Curriculum improvement considered within the framework of teacher education;
- f. The concept of teaching considered within the framework of teacher education.

The Concept of Teaching Considered within the Framework of Teacher Education

Teacher education is largely designed to portray teaching as both a science and an art. Tanner and Tanner (1980), are convinced that the two versions of education are never separated from each other. Artistry, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980), is a characteristic of teacher at the negative – creative level of curriculum development designed by them. These teachers are engaged in really imaginative work with youngsters. They consider teaching a very serious enterprise and therefore try to explore more effective ways of executing it. They are able to diagnose their classroom problems and communicate their insights not only to other teachers but also to their students (See 'Level of Teachers' Professional Performance Built into Curriculum Development).

Although teacher education is designed to subscribe to the view that teaching is a science, in this setting, it (science) should not be confused with narrow empiricism. The teacher as a scientist is a diagnostician. He or she tries out new ideas as hypotheses and finds out where they do work, and why, and where they don't work, and why. The teacher as scientist is not vulnerable to educational fads and panaceas. New ideas are adopted or rejected on the basis of philosophical principle and the findings of research.

However, Tanner and Tanner (1980), caution that, teacher education must abandon the narrow-minded, empirical view of educational science if research in it is really to help the teacher. Research executed within the framework of this orientation of teacher education must seek to develop, Tanner and Tanner's (1980) Level III teachers (see earlier) who can diagnose and solve emergent problems in the educational situation. Such teachers will have to reach out and garner their own resources, according to Tanner and Tanner, must include the latest 'Products of educational research and development, among other resources. Tanner and Tanner are convinced that the best that researchers can do for teachers, if teachers are to operate at the generative-creative level designed by them, is to help them make better decisions. This development explains why Berliner and Gage's

(1976), remark that, “the teacher not only has the prerogative to make choices of content and teaching methods; this is the teacher’s responsibility’.

Teachers as an Integral Part of Education

The teacher cannot afford to relegate his role to the background within the framework of education as a process. If he does so, it is at this own peril including his possible extinction. He cannot afford not to be involved as an integral part of education. Within the framework of education, the teacher performs certain major functions-commitment to instruction, socialization and evaluation.

The instrumental process demands that the teacher transmits a body of knowledge and skills appropriate to the abilities and needs of the child. He performs this functions through direct teaching and by organizing learning situations of less formal kind. Hoyle (1969), observes that, the appropriate role of the teacher considered within the framework of education is that of ‘teacher-as-instructor’. Hoyle considers that, this is he most obvious and public of the teacher’s functions and or roles.

By way of specialization through transactions within the classroom, the teacher prepares the child for participating in the way of life of his community or society. This process involves some instructions since the acquisitions of literacy and numeracy by the child can be regarded as an essential part of the socialization process. To a very large extent, the teacher commits the child to the values and norms of society through the socialization process. In many quarters, it is often said that values are ‘caught and not taught’ which rightly suggests that, they are acquired in subtle ways in the process of teacher-pupil interaction. Success in encouraging children to internalize a particular set of values depends to a large extent upon the teacher’s own embodiment of these values. In this circumstance, the appropriate role of the teacher is thus ‘teacher-as-model’.

Through the process of evaluation, the teacher differentiate children on the basis of their intellectual (and often social skills in preparation for the social and occupational roles which they will eventually play). In this circumstance, the appropriate role of the teacher is ‘teacher-as-judge’. Thus, the teacher enacts this role in ways, which include recommending promotions and demotions within the school, nominating children to take certain external examinations, and counseling children and their parents with regard to appropriate school courses, further education courses, and employment possibilities. The judgments made by the teacher are of the greatest importance not least because they tend to become ‘self-fulfilling prothesis’ in that, within limits children tend to meet the expectations which the teacher holds of them. Thus, according to Hoyle (1969:15), “bright children become brighter and dull children duller’ good children become better and bad children become worse”.

Hoyle (1967) reveals that, at the infant stage of education, socialization is the most significant function of the teacher. At this level of education, the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy, transmitting a

core of general knowledge, and encouraging pupils to acquire the skills of learning and to accept the value of learning. This process continues at the primary stage of education, but at this stage instruction and evaluation begins to become significant. At the secondary state, there is a much more obvious swing towards instruction and evaluation, although socialization remains a significant task for the teacher of the adolescent.

Apart from fulfilling the above functions, the teacher is also committed to the role of motivating pupils, maintaining control, and generally creating an environment for learning. These roles are often referred to as 'facilitating roles'. Hoyle (1967), considers that, inside the classroom, the teacher performs a set of sub-roles, any of which might involve the simultaneous fulfillment of number of functions. They are responses to a total teaching situation. Real and Watenberg (1951) have presented a list of more important sub-roles played by the teacher within the framework of the school. Each of these sub-roles is accompanied by a brief indication of the functions of the teacher and who is also expected to feature prominently as an integral part of the education process. These functions are briefly summarized as follows:-

- i. As a representative of society, the teacher inculcates moral percepts particularly amongst young children.
- ii. As a judge, the teacher awards marks amongst learners and equally rates them based on their performance with respect to classroom activities.
- iii. The teacher functions as a major resource person because he possess a set of knowledge and skill which he dispenses to learners.
- iv. The teacher functions as a helper in that he provides guidance for pupils' difficulties.
- v. The teacher executes the job of a referee because he settles disputes amongst pupils.
- vi. The teacher very often plays the role of a detective because he discovers rule breakers amongst school goers.
- vii. The teacher often represents an object of identification because he possesses traits which children imitate.
- viii. The teacher is also seen as a limit of anxiety because he helps children to control impulses.
- ix. The teacher functions as an 'ego-supporter' because he helps children to have confidence in themselves.
- x. The teacher functions as a group leader because he usually establishes the climate of a group, e.g. a class of students or learners.
- xi. The teacher is looked upon as parents' surrogate because he acts as an object of bids for attention from younger children.
- xii. The teacher is seen as a friend and confidant because he usually establishes warm relationship with children and shares confidences.
- xiii. The teacher is looked upon as an object of affection because he meets the psychological needs of children.

It is worth emphasizing that the leadership role of the teacher makes him a central figure in the business of education. His main task is to lead his pupils towards those learning and behavioural goals which have been prescribed for them or upon which he himself has decided. He will often have to carry out his task in the face of pupil indifference or even hostility, and in order to overcome the reluctance of children to work hard or behave in a manner acceptable to adults, the teacher must develop a variety of leadership techniques which, taken together, constitute a leadership style.

On the whole, there are great variations in the teaching styles a teacher adopts within the framework of the classroom. These variations largely represent the teacher's idea of what the classroom should be like.

Conclusion

Education in itself is a nebulous concept. It is an embodiment of many processes and abstractions which form activities and conceptual framework.

When we talk of having been 'educated', we think of 'having done something worthwhile or commendable', and this is not always measurable. There is a way we can see education as an achievement, an end in itself, which gives satisfaction just as good health does. Education can, however, lead to values that we can measure but this may not be the only way we can look at it. Aims of education may not agree in practice since they may be seen to vary with people and situation, but all seem to agree on the view that education should bring about what is desirable.

The philosophy of Nigerian education is hinged on the use of education in grooming and building the effective Nigerian citizen; it is also tailored to produce a united Nigeria, which is expected to cater for the good of all its citizens.

Modern education is an expensive venture and is generally meant to serve the needs of society; this is almost an inescapable social factor. A commitment to this line of thought, among other things, teacher education has to be geared towards the preparation, grooming and production of professional teachers. This cadre of teachers must not only be committed to the building of knowledge associated with curriculum planning, development and implementation, they must also be engulfed in curriculum improvement for the benefit of the learner and the society at large. The teacher, therefore, cannot afford to abscond from being an integral part of education, thus the teacher is committed to the transmission of knowledge, values and beliefs and the justification of these to the learner, as well as the understanding of these by the learner. The teacher is bound to be concerned about the well being of the learner in all that he undertakes to do with the learner. Thus, Ukeje (1976), reveals that, the teacher is always at the hub of any educational enterprise and cannot be dispensed with.

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