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Re-Imagining a Philosophy of Education: Insights from Ludwig Wittgenstein

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Abstract

Clarity of thought which enables the formulation of a formidable roadmap is and must be seen as a sine-qua-non for any meaningful scientific engagement. This reality does not escape the attention of Ludwig Wittgenstein when he insists that “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,” and so he demonstrates in clearer terms the need for precision and factuality in language and speech which are fundamental prerequisites in the formulation of any philosophy of education that is billed for a bountiful harvest. Akin to clarity of thought and speech is the need for contextualisation, which Wittgenstein’s thesis on language game, forms of life and meaning as in use vigorously project. How far this can be achieved is the problem this paper seeks to address. It is therefore the intention of this research to inquire on how the postulations of Wittgenstein can engender constructive and innovative ideas about education, especially in Nigeria? A starting point in this inquiry is imagined to be Wittgenstein’s thoughts on language-game theory, forms of life and meaning as in use. This proves the need for precision and factuality in language and so must be made to bear on the formulations of the principles of philosophy of education in Nigeria especially in placing emphasis on context-based optimizations. The research hopes that a contextualisation of educational principles creates room for the recognition of cultural contexts as embodiments of different forms of life wherein education is nurtured and grown, which must be encountered as a necessary shareholder in the entire educational enterprise for a meaningful progressive consideration.

Keywords: Sine-qua-non, Philosophy of education, Bountiful harvest, Wittgenstein’s thoughts, Contextualisation of educational

Introduction

Emile Durkheim explaining the need for context in education, states that “we cannot usefully treat any teaching problem, whatever it may be, except by starting where we are in time and space. i.e., with the conditions confronting the children with whom we are concerned.”¹ This simply means that education must be contextualised if it must have a meaning. It is in this circumstance that the Wittgensteinian postulations are viewed with the particular intent of enhancing the educational package within the Nigerian context. The language game ‘*Sprachspiel*’ or forms of life ‘*Lebensformen*’ or even the meaning as in use ‘*Bedeutung in der Gebrauch*’ which are philosophical concepts developed by Wittgenstein, refer to simple examples of language use and the actions into which the language is woven. In this, Wittgenstein argued that a word or even a sentence has meaning only as a result of the “rule” of the “game” being played, of which its meaning is properly demonstrated in the particular context in discourse. Depending on the context, for example, the utterance whereby “water!” could be an order, the answer to a question, or some other form of communication.² How these ideas of Wittgenstein could contribute to the philosophy of education in Nigeria becomes particularly interesting both to a lover of education as a contextualised engagement as well as to a philosopher of language. Hence, in the consideration of these, Wittgenstein offers the world of Philosophy an ideological foundation and defense for contextualization amongst many other things.

Education globally, reflects a form of philosophical context. Most of the best performing countries in terms of education have adopted key patterns and models of education. These include; the philosophical ideology undergirding their educational system, choice and quality of educationists, duration of education, career options, harnessing and development of key talents, definition and redefinition of meaning, acceptable and unacceptable ethical norms for their education system. This research examines whether the Nigerian educational system reflects such current philosophical innovations. When the answer is in the positive, then ways and means of reinforcing that which is for a richer and better yield, but when not, a further search for possible solutions to the educational quagmire in our society becomes inevitable.

The Philosophy of Education and the Scope of Engagement

The Philosophy of education is the ideological foundation influencing a particular system of teaching and learning. According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “It is the branch of applied or practical philosophy concerned with the nature and aims of education and the philosophical problems arising from educational theory and practice.”³ It investigates and cuts across multiple intellectual fields and disciplines. Wittgenstein could be considered a philosopher of education because he fits the description of

“conceptual clarity, argumentative rigour and fair-minded consideration of the interests of all involved in or affected by educational efforts and arrangements.”⁴ The two key words involved here, ‘philosophy,’ and ‘education,’ have multiple historical originations. There is Chinese/Oriental Philosophy, African Philosophy, Western Philosophy, and Eastern Philosophy amongst others. Also, in each of these philosophical cultures there exists a system of teaching and learning which could be considered a form of education.

The consequence today is that there were many philosophies of education which influenced various societies and cultures down till the present time. However, the acknowledgement and delineation of philosophy of education as a branch of analytic philosophy could be attributed to Western philosophers like Socrates, John Dewey and Ludwig Wittgenstein.⁵ Philosophy of education as a matter of fact deals with issues on definitions of education, types of education, curriculum contents and constructions, purposes and goals of the school system, research methods and procedures, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Looking at the Nigerian educational system, one could surmise that philosophy of education undergirds the teaching and learning process, although very far from being the most possible best achievable. Consequently, it is purely legitimate to raise some fundamental questions like; who are the forebears of the Nigerian Philosophy of education? Who are the architects of the Nigerian school curriculum? What goals did they have in mind and what results have been achieved since then? Is it possible that the Nigerian educational philosophy was laid by the British Colonialists for the interest of the colonial masters and not for the usage and relevance of the local content and context?⁶ Would not their goals be to create a governable and profitable colony? Can one ascribe the current socio-political conundrum and cognitive dissonance that is rife in the Nigerian society to the colonial interest? Or could it be the impact of other systems of thought on the educational system in Nigeria?⁷

The reason for these imaginations is given legitimacy by the colonial history of Nigeria and most other African countries. Consequently, an understanding of the British/Western education is essential to the development of education in Nigeria.⁸ Of particular importance is the role religion played and still plays in the Nigerian education, bearing in mind that, “education in Nigeria can be attributed to religious faiths such as Islam from the Middle east and Christianity from Europe and South Africa”⁹ and by extension, by the missionaries from Sierraleone¹⁰ and other neighboring African lands. Understanding the philosophical foundations of the aforementioned religions would provide greater insights into the philosophical background of the Nigerian educational system. From a global perspective, philosophy of education is interconnected. Educational Philosophies and practices of Asia have had great influence on the

¹ Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, Dover Publications, New York, 2002, 34.

² [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/language_game_\(philosophy\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/language_game_(philosophy)) retrieved on 2 April 2024.

³ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/education-philosophy/> retrieved on July 12, 2024.

⁴ Op. Cit. July 12, 2024.

⁵ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/education-philosophy/> accessed on July 12, 2024.

⁶ This argument will be sufficiently developed with cited sources subsequently in the course of this article.

⁷ Daniel A. Nomishan., *Education in Nigeria: Reflections and Global Perspectives*. Xlibris Pub, Bloomington, 2014, 187.

⁸ Ibid 187.

⁹ Ibid . 187.

¹⁰ This refers to the missionary expedition of Ajayi Crowther and his crew who came from Sierraleone to evangelize the Nigerian soil after so many multiple failures by the European missionaries of earlier missionary expedition.

so-called Western education.”¹¹ The Chinese civilization for instance which had made a mark in its development of politics, trade, and education has contributed tremendously to education as we know it today.”¹²

A major contribution of Chinese education to the rest of the world's education is the “development of a system of comprehensive written examinations to assess students' academic competence.”¹³ Interestingly, the ancient near east has contributed to global education, especially in the field of mathematics, science, architecture, literature and spirituality. Particularly important are the activities of the ancient Egyptians who harnessed the River Nile for transportation and its water resource for irrigation in the production of agricultural cash and food crops. Egypt is also well known for the use of papyrus for writing and for early record keeping and these have great impact in the educational development of the ancient near east.¹⁴ Innocent Osuagwu and Innocent Onyewuenyi argue that Egyptian Philosophy of education is the cradle of Western philosophy of education.¹⁵ In similar vein, Daniel Nomishan observes that “Western education began as a desire of the Greeks to prepare individuals for military service, communication, and moral excellence. The curriculum consisted of grammar, logic and rhetoric.”¹⁶ This foundation for Western philosophy of education was laid by Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and, is also credited as the cradle for Western civilization. It is therefore correct to argue that Europe as is known today is a child of Western education. This in turn is a child of multiple education backgrounds from the ancient Arabs, Chinese, Egypt, Romans and the Greeks.

The Western world is generally considered to be the majority of the developed nations in Europe and North America. These western countries are undergirded by a common ideology which is traceable to a similar philosophy of education. Hence, the similarity in most western countries with regard to politics, culture, education, values, religion, entertainment and lifestyle in general speak volumes in this regard. Democracy as a political culture of Western countries is a product of their common philosophy of education. This similarity is traceable to their philosophical forebears who generated the philosophical and ideological education that spurred the development of these nations. Though these ideologies took several stages and centuries, the resultant effect was the same; human liberty, enlightenment, development and progress.

Philosophy of Education in Nigeria.

Before the coming of the colonialists, there were in existence multiple self-established societies in Nigeria. Some of the most prominent pre-colonial Nigerian cultures with centralized systems of governance, economy, and security include Oyo, Kanem-Borno, Nupe and Juku.¹⁷ Other cultures with advanced technology, arts, economics and governance include; Nri, Bini, Igbo-ukwu and Aro. It is logical to argue that these cultures with well-developed systems of governance, technology among others, must have a foundational ideology on why and how they lived together with a system of

teaching and learning in this life. Sadly, there are few to no written records dating from this era to sustain this argument. All we have today are the amazing historical works like the Igbo-ukwu bronze, and Bini wall which demonstrate the presence of such an ideology.

Colonialism in Africa had one goal; to enthrone and sustain the holistic power of the colonialists on the colonised. The argument that colonisation destroyed the originality and authenticity of most African countries has been well made by authors like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi WaThiongo, Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney. Based on their arguments, one can equally posit that the dearth of Nigerian Philosophy of education began with the British colonialists. The first evidence of this is the death or relegation of indigenous language. Many of the advanced societies in the world developed their philosophy of education using their indigenous language as their primary mode of thought and learning. The benefit is that they were able to think, teach, learn and develop in original categories. This is still evident in most developed societies today. The Chinese, Arabs, Russians, Germans, Americans, Koreans, think, learn, teach and research in their indigenous languages. Nigeria and Africa are the only places where one must first of all learn in foreign languages and then interpret the proceeds of learning into indigenous languages. The consequence is then that one only learns and assimilates ideas that the owners of the language want since language is not only an instrument of learning but also a purveyor of culture. More still, one must in this circumstance grapple with two outstanding realities; firstly the content of learning and then secondly, the harassment of the foreign language. Unfortunately, the vehicle of learning, which is in this circumstance the foreign language is even priced and valued higher than the content of learning.¹⁸

The post-colonial system of education in Nigeria is still inhibited from full growth by the colonial trappings. There is a strong tie between the inability of Nigeria to assume an authentic national educational status and so its consequent educational failures.¹⁹ From the time of independence till date, Nigeria has struggled with the burden of national independence in all its aspects. This struggle is shown in the multiple coups, clashes, crises, terrorism, pogroms, calls for secession, and weak governance that have trailed the nation till date. The refusal of the Nigerian ruling class with the support of Britain to create a veritable Nigerian state has done more harm than good on the Nigerian educational system. This is primarily because it has denied Nigerians the opportunity to develop a philosophy of education that is patterned for a collective and contextual progress. After the civil war, the National Conference on Curriculum development was organized by the Nigerian Educational Research Council and met in Lagos in September 1969. The conference helped to formulate the new national philosophy of education as:

- a. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the society.
- b. The training of the mind in building valuable concepts, generalizations, and understanding of the world around us.

¹¹ Ibid 183

¹² Daniel A. Nomishan., *Education in Nigeria: Reflections and Global Perspectives*. 183.

¹³ Ibid 183.

¹⁴ Ibid 262.

¹⁵ Innocent Onyewuenyi., *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: Ancient Egypt in Retrospect*. University of Nigeria Press, 1993.

¹⁶ Daniel A. Nomishan., *Education in Nigeria: Reflections and Global Perspectives*. 262.

¹⁷ <https://kamow001.wordpress.com/pre-colonial/> retrieved on July 13 2024.

¹⁸ Philip Chika Omenukwa, “Religion and the Dynamics of Language and Culture in Nigeria”, in *West Africa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2025, 142-158, 155.

¹⁹ This claim will be sufficiently argued in the course of this article.

- c. The acquisition of appropriate skills, activities and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in his society.
- d. The acquisition of a relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world phenomena.²⁰

Despite these resolutions, there was not much progress due to a lack of a national identity thus leading one to unending interrogations: What are the right values and attitudes towards individuals and societies? What valuable concepts and generalizations does one need in Nigeria? What are the mental and physical skills, activities, and competence that one needs in Nigeria? What relevant facts and knowledge did Nigerians need to acquire? The events before and after the civil war showed that at no point was the Nigerian state truly interested in a national educational development. If they did, what then justifies the removal of history from the school curriculum?²¹ In the bid to retain the vicious and amorphous identity of the Nigerian state as created by the British, successive Nigerian governments did not sustain progressive models of education and autonomous academic curriculum. This would have enabled different regions of the country to learn according to their contextually developed philosophy of education and so responsibly address the core challenges of their regions and particular contexts. Unfortunately, the Nigerian education pattern did not recognize multicultural diversity. The multicultural systems and patterns between the North and South were clearly not reflected in the organization, structuring and arrangement of the country. The systemic and structural problems in Nigeria today grossly demonstrate that Nigeria was not structured for her own progress but for the interest of those who established her as an independent nation. The political divisions, administrative strategies, foreign relations and advices have all been articulated for the maintenance of a sort of British dominance and stronghold on the country rather than its development and growth.

A fundamental question that will precipitate a solution should be, what should a Nigerian Philosophy of education look like? Without the assumption of an exhaustive answer, an original Nigerian Philosophy of education ought to begin with a system of thinking that reflects the Nigerian cultures and worldviews with a strong emphasis on Nigerian languages. After the civil war, the Federal Military Government attempted to foster an educational innovation that is rooted on the Nigerian cultures and worldviews for a determined indigenous educational philosophy. Some of the objectives included student's ability to (a) keep Nigeria strong (b) produce a dynamic economy, (c) attain a just and egalitarian society, (d) provide education for all, and enjoy a free and democratic society.²² Attempts made by successive democratic governments since 1999 while promising still reflected a horrendous pattern of maintaining an already dysfunctional system hence betraying the entire goal of the educational process itself which is the ability to

think, to develop oneself and be able to respond responsibly to both the personal and common projects. Unfortunately, regional, tribal, and or even religious sentiments and affiliations dominate the structuring of educational curriculum and goal. The Obasanjo regime, for instance, which introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE), also allowed the adoption of the Sharia Law in the Northern part of Nigeria without considering a fair equal recognition of southern educational peculiarities in the south as well. This resulted in the growing imbalance in education in Northern and Southern Nigeria.²³

Wittgenstein, Language-Game Theory and Philosophy of Education.

The language game, forms of life and meaning as in use theory of Wittgenstein provide the ideological anchor upon which this research argues for a contextual philosophy of education. The language game theory, is one of Wittgenstein's most popular theories, which furthers the argument that language is like a game with fixed known rules by the players of the game. In this wise, it shuns occultic tendencies and is totally submissive to specific principles of engagement. To speak meaningfully is to be engaged in a game, and to be a good player, obedience to the rules and principles of the game must be kept in focus and upheld and this must be made to adapt most meaningfully to the templates of assessment of the community in which their form of life is built and established.

Wittgenstein introduces the language game theory in his explication of the use and development of language for the purposes of clarity and avoidance of ambiguity in speech. The game theory offers explanation for the use of words, concepts and sentences outside of official or common usage. For him, concepts or words are best understood in the context in which they are used. The introduction of language game in his linguistic elucidation was consciously made as a kind of criticism of Frege's essentialist understanding of language. The whole idea of language games suggests that language is an activity whose meaning can only be revealed when the rule of the game is actively implemented. It equally demonstrates the multivariant ways in which language can be used among the community of language users. "Interestingly, Wittgenstein insists that the fundamental function of a philosopher is not to be located in the proposal of new and strange theories but rather in removing misunderstandings emanating from the usage of words. Language games in this wise, are tied together by the family resemblance theory (Familienähnlichkeit), and they serve as points for comparative reasons "meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities. With this in mind, Wittgenstein comes very strongly against any possibility of a private language."²⁴

the Northern and Southern states. The principle of "federal character" which is meant to create equal employment opportunities for all regions, actually allows for less qualified persons to take up government appointments against the more qualified people. This fosters a system of mediocrity which is a major problem of Nigeria today.

²⁴Philip C. Omenkwa, and Ikechukwu, A. Kanu, Ibid., 670, See also Lawhead, W. F. (2001) *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*. USA: Wadsworth Group; Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, Trans. G. E. Anscombe, London: Blackwell Publishing.

²⁰Taiwo C.O, *The Nigerian Education System: Past, Present and Future*. Thomas Nelson, Nigeria. 1980, 165.

²¹ Philip Omenkwa, "The Force of History: A Call to Rescue the Sinking Sheep", <https://thesun.ng/the-force-of-history-a-call-to-rescue-the-sinking-ship/> 2017, accessed 25-07-2024.

²²Taiwo C.O, *The Nigerian Education System: Past, Present and Future*. Thomas Nelson, Nigeria. 1980, 165.

²³While education was meant to be compulsory for all Nigerians, many Northern states operating under a different penal code allowed a massive lack of education for political reasons. Till date, there are wide differences in academic requirements and standards between

The language game theory contends that words should be understood within the context in which they are used in language (meaning as use).²⁵ As already demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, education is largely dependent on the social meaning it holds, thus, the reason for the various philosophies of education in different societies. Wittgenstein argues that words have no intrinsic meaning but rather share a family resemblance. The meaning in a word is therefore conferred on it by the social context it represents.²⁶ There is a sense in which this also applies to philosophy of education. This is the sense in which an education has no meaning except within the context of social practice. Herbert Spencer opines that the great aim of education is not knowledge but action. This action is not random but specifically tailored to the need of the society. This explains why almost all Western Universities require their African students applying for admission to articulate how their study will benefit their society upon graduation. Local Universities also require students to explain the social and pragmatic relevance of their thesis. In the academic world, great minds in science, history, literature, theology, etc. while being expected to adhere to objective academic standards, are also equally expected to bring in their contextual originality. This shows a profound form of ideological relevance. Just like in the language game or the meaning as in use theory, the contextual knowledge of education must respect the peculiarities of the cultural background in which it is to be carried out. Nevertheless, although educational expectations may not sharply differ from one another, respect for constitutional uniqueness must be profoundly upheld. Nonetheless, there is a form of blending which allows for a cross-fertilization and adoption of ideas which must always be encouraged for a promising harvest.

Adopting the Language-Game and Meaning as in use Theory in the Nigerian Educational System.

A common error prevalent in the Nigerian school system is the lack of a generally defined goal of education that is sometimes manifested in the inconsistent educational projections. Oftentimes, one witnesses inconsistencies in objectives and goals orchestrating an unfortunate misplacement of priorities. A fine gentleman, who is a principal of one of the reputable Secondary Schools known for excellent performance in Final Examinations, while accepting the unimaginable decadence that is currently prevalent in the conduct of examinations in the secondary schools, precisely in external examinations like WAEC, unrepentantly adduced that the reason for the decadence stems from the lack of remuneration, effects of hunger and the brutal harassing financial demands and challenges, which have thus encouraged the growing tendency for Nigerian schools to focus on money making by trading excellence with honesty, flaunting of a deceptive image as serious academically sound schools which the direct opposite is the actual situation, and all done for the singular purpose of deception and for the ill sake of making much money. In this situation therefore, a total disregard of the sanctity of examination for cheap salability is inaugurated, fame and relevance thrown overboard, to the detriment of sound knowledge,

gracious ideas, endurable values and morals, and an admirable cultivation of interpersonal and multicultural relationships sadly relinquished.

There is a sense in which many Nigerian schools have become breeding ground for religious and tribal bigotry rather than breeding ground for ideas. Students are basically expected to 'pass their exams' and obey the school's rules and regulations. But beyond these standard expectations, there is a blatant and growing sense in which students and their teachers could get away with misogyny, tribalism, religious intolerance, bullying, extortion, sexual predation and harassment, disrespect, ethnic profiling, and violation of fundamental human rights etc. While these things may be articulated on paper, there are obviously little or no punitive measures for those who disregard them. There are also little or no measures put in place to enforce them. Hence, there is a clear sense in which they are being permitted and possibly encouraged by the school system. A possible way of responding to these problems is the restructuring of the entire Nigerian educational system. This restructuring ought to recognize many of these solutions already provided by educationists and philosophers. Some possible steps towards reconstructing the Nigerian school system, based on a contextual philosophy of education that is informed by the Wittgensteinian postulations would involve:

Student Diversity

Student diversity also known as diversity pedagogy involves culturally responsive teaching which recognizes the importance of the understanding of the principle that knowledge, dispositions, and performance play a role in teaching and learning.²⁷ Diversity embodies context recognition which is duly reflected in the meaning as in use and the language game theory which Wittgenstein projects. There are certain skills and knowledge patterns which might be easier for students to assimilate based on their cultural predisposition. This is equally reflected in Wittgenstein's discussion on forms of life. The Igbo trading system is a concrete example in this regard for its pragmatic approach to business growth and development and would in this wise serve as an opportunity for building a global economic system. The Northern Agricultural produce is an opportunity for these cultures to develop global agricultural produce and systems. Children are born passionately eager to make as much sense as they can of things around them, and any attempt to control, manipulate, or divert this process portends terrible consequences, because the independent scientists in the child disappears.²⁸ Hence, the Nigerian educational system should focus on discovering, extrapolating and enhancing student diversities. Student diversity does not only involve tribe, but also any form of common difference amongst students like gender, age, language, life-style, religion, political inclination, and disability.²⁹

Celebrating diversity in the classroom is based on an understanding of the following:

- i. Interconnectedness and interdependence: Man is a gregarious animal and meaningful life experiences are reached through interaction with others.

²⁵ Kenneth Agetue, *Wittgenstein's Concept of Language Game: A Critical Discourse*. Abraka Humanities Review, Vol 12: No1, 2022, 106. See also, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §1, 421.

²⁶ Philip C. Omenukwa and Ikechukwu, A. Kanu, "Meaning in Wittgenstein and African Indigenous Languages" in *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, (2024), 22 (1): 661-676, 669.

²⁷ Daniel A. Nomishan., *Education in Nigeria: Reflections and Global Perspectives*. 155.

²⁸ Ibid155.

²⁹ Ibid 20.

- ii. Effective interaction depends on good human relations and skills; “children are people, too” goes the adage.
- iii. Multiculturalism involves not only recognition of ethnic, gender, exceptionalities diversity, but their acceptance and affirmation.
- iv. The way a teacher acts towards others and their understanding of how children form attitudes, plays an important role in how children develop respect toward and value others. Hence, teachers do not have to “teach” respect and values as such.
- v. We all, including children must learn to resolve conflicts with others without aggression or violence.³⁰

To promote student diversity, the National and state school boards should focus on promoting multicultural patterns of education in the curriculum in view of responding adequately to the various particular unique contexts. It is in this that an effective beneficial exploration of the Wittgensteinian forms of life, that is further demonstrated in his meaning as in use and the language game theory give the educational life a finer reinforcement. Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good.³¹ Multicultural education abhors amorphousness or an “it does not matter” attitude. It upholds a respectful assertion identity, in which case the members of the group can be known and identified. A profound recognition and respect are placed as fundamental bases and a premium of consideration. The existence of the other is accorded the space it deserves, but it does not stop at the recognition of the other, but goes beyond that to first announce the existence of self as a worthy member. Multicultural education not only draws content, concepts, paradigms, and theories from specialized interdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies and women studies (and from history, the social and behavioral sciences), it also interrogates, challenges, and reinterprets content, concepts, and paradigms from the established disciplines. Multicultural education applies content from these fields and disciplines to pedagogy and curriculum development in educational settings. Consequently, one may define multicultural education as a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women studies.³²

The Teaching Profession and Effectiveness

The second solution would be to focus on teacher effectiveness and an upgrade of a standard remuneration of the teaching profession. For a profession that is pivotal to the progress of the nation, teachers

in Nigeria are poorly remunerated. Beyond the remuneration, there are many other issues mitigating effectiveness in the teaching profession. Lack of adequate learning environment is a problem. This is caused by poor financing, poor learning and teaching standards for the teachers, and overcrowded classrooms. Teachers develop attitudes that enhance learning as well as other attitudes that could negatively affect learning with particular reference to the student-teacher learning disposition. As educators, they can either arouse curiosity in students or destroy same. We often ask such questions as: what is the role of the teacher in school improvement and student learning? How can one become the best teacher that one can be? There are no easy answers to these questions or solutions to the concerns. Attempting to answer these and other questions will lead us closer to what effective teaching is.³³ Teaching is defined as “what a teacher says or does that engage children and which contributes to their learning and development.”³⁴ Hence, a thorough understanding of the subject matter of the curriculum at a given level is essential to effective teaching.³⁵ The way children learn is important because it can guide in the strategies that can be employed to help them better understand what is taught. Such ways are based on the theories of learning, the principles which cause individuals to change and develop.³⁶ The principles of learning or how children learn has been the study of psychologists for years. The Russian psychologist, Ivan Pavlov, promoted what is now called classical conditioning after studying animals and how they respond to stimuli. The operant conditioning theory is based on the more recent theories of learning advanced by B. F Skinner and others.³⁷ There are also Piaget’s stages of mental development- sensory-motor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations.³⁸ More recently nonverbal human behaviors have been linked to “cognitive, affective, and social development” that may affect non-verbal communication and hence, learning in the inclusive classroom.³⁹ For effective teaching, these psychological principles ought to be integrated into the Nigerian school teaching and learning pedagogy. Effective teaching involves the ability to do everything in ones power to create an atmosphere in which students will be motivated, because, teachers and students tend to get frustrated in the face of lack of success.⁴⁰ In this wise, learning becomes a game whose principles of engagement are well known by both the students and the teachers and thus meaning must be sought in and within the context of the participatory engagement. This is profoundly proper to the discussion already had on the different forms of life which gives legitimacy to the enriching differences noticeable in the formation of the human community. For a meaningful game, a successful engagement of the players in the game is fundamentally paramount, and thus meaningfully striking the chord of Wittgenstein’s language-game postulation.

Effective teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students are found to exhibit the following teaching behaviors:

- i. Communicating clearly when giving directions.

³⁰ Ibid155.

³¹ Banks, J., & Banks, C (Eds.) *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (2nd Ed.) Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994, 11.

³² Ibid. 12.

³³ Daniel A. Nomishan., *Education in Nigeria: Reflections and Global Perspectives*. 146

³⁴ Bredekamp, S., *Effective Practices in Early Childhood: Building a Foundation*. Pearson Education Inc. New Jersey, 2011, 266.

³⁵ Ibid. 153.

³⁶ Ibid133.

³⁷ Ibid34

³⁸ Rosa, S. B. *Understanding the role and Potential impact of nonverbal communication in the primary inclusion classroom*. ERIC Number: ED464728, ERIC Collections, March 2022, 34.

³⁹ Ibid34.

⁴⁰ Eggen, P. D., & Kauchak, D. P. *Strategies for teachers: Teaching Content and thinking skills* (6thed.) Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. 2012, 50.

- ii. Obtaining and maintaining students' engagement in instructional tasks by pacing instruction appropriately, promoting involvement, and communicating their expectations for students' success in completing tasks;
- iii. Monitoring students' progress; and
- iv. Providing immediate feedback whenever required regarding students' success.⁴¹

In general, effective teaching can be seen as teaching that employs effective planning and delivery of instruction by emphasizing meaningful learning, and teaching is based on a thorough understanding of child development, and possession of managerial skills.⁴²

Reforming Schools and Education Curriculum

The Nigerian school system and academic school curriculum is overdue for a reform. This reform ought to be based on a philosophy of education which reflects the needs and goals of Nigeria on a general level without losing sight of the peculiarities of its regional constitutions. The aims of any curriculum depend on the philosophy driving the curriculum. According to John Dewey, "the business of philosophy is to provide for the aims and a method of schools... Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."⁴³ In the 1969 National conference on curriculum development organized by the Nigeria Educational Research Council, the following objectives were formulated into a national philosophy of education for Nigeria:

- a. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the society.
- b. The training of the mind in building valuable concepts, generalizations and understanding of the world around us.
- c. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in his society.
- d. The acquisition of a relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world phenomenon.⁴⁴

These objectives are good, but they need to be ingrained in the proper philosophy of education. Taiwo argues that the basic philosophy of Nigerian education is that education is that force which "can be used to foster the much-needed unity of Nigeria and to correct the lack of balance in inter-state and intra-state development."⁴⁵ But this is considerably insufficient. Beyond unity, education in Nigeria should foster progress and innovations and respectfully engender progressive diversities, which are as a matter-

of-fact sure foundation of unimaginable enrichment for the growth and development of any society. Even the much-needed unity is not being reflected in the school system because of palpable injustice in so many spheres and the tacit disposition to ethnicism; a socio-political terrorism.⁴⁶ The injustice in the Nigerian school system is evidenced by the disparity in the academic curriculum and standard for Northern and Southern Nigeria.⁴⁷ The reformed school curriculum is expected to adopt principles of contextual traditional African education. Some of these include:

- a. To develop the child's latent physical skills.
- b. To develop character.
- c. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.
- d. To develop intellectual skills.
- e. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labor.
- f. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
- g. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.⁴⁸

Development of the Taxonomies of Learning and Teaching in Context

There must be an active link between the teaching and learning taxonomies to correspond to the peculiarities of learners from their rich but diverse social milieu and cultural ethos (corresponding to Wittgenstein's language game theory and forms of life postulations) if the outcome of their training must add value, and become peculiarly intelligible, to their societies. In line with an adequately considered curriculum based on the requirements of a particular society, like Nigeria, the skills, proficiencies, knowledge, traits, competences each subject area focuses must necessarily take care of the affective/emotional, psychomotor/action and cognitive/knowledge domains with the kind of teacher-taxonomies, good enough and passionate about such an outcome under a moral, social, cultural, religious and professional obligation beyond primarily pecuniary benefits. The understanding that salaries come before teaching satisfaction set our learning outcomes behind their objectives in the current adopted colonial curriculum. But when teaching is given a more fundamental cultural/traditional sense of priority, the commitment and outcome would reflect their goals. This is a fact because if the learners see in the curriculum as key elements of life or only as means of survival and the process of acquiring such knowledge or competence (e.g., the nwa-boy strategy) is transmitted as a cultural ethos, the spirit of becoming

⁴¹ Joseph Garcia., *Reflections on Teaching Diversity*. Sage Journals, Vol 18, Issue 4, Washington. 1994, 235.

⁴²Leonard Chiarelott, et. al, *Learning Style Inventories: Implications for Curriculum and Instruction*, 1983, 35.

⁴³ John Dewey. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. MacMillan pub. New York, 1916. 113

⁴⁴Taiwo C. O., *The Nigerian Education System: Past, Present and Future*. 163.

⁴⁵Ibid 188.

⁴⁶ Cf. Philip Chika Omenukwa, "Man is Narrow but Vast – Ethnicism and its Presuppositions: An Anthropological Appeal to the Fundamental Constitution of the Human Person" in *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, vol. 7, no.1, (2024), 103-123.

⁴⁷ Despite the higher academic standard for Southern Nigeria, Northern Nigeria has often been favored in federal government employments and appointments. This has consequently created an avalanche of mediocrity especially in the education sector. More still, there are Northern political establishments whom are very resistant to ideas and efforts trying to bridge the education gap between the North and South. According to the 2013 USAID report, Nigeria has a massive number of out of school children and young adults with limited literacy and numeracy skills who have little hope of ever joining the formal workforce. While education indicators are poor nationwide, the greatest need for assistance is in the predominantly Muslim north.

⁴⁸Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Allen and Unwin, London ,1974, 20.

what we consumed naturally surges the ingenuity in the member of the society unlike the status quo where there is an alternative despite acquiring basic school knowledge over the periods of growing. Therefore, if there is the way the African generally or the Nigerian particularly thinks then the taxonomies of his/her learning and the teaching should reflect and affect those areas without generalities. This would be ensuring that he or she understands the language game and plays it accordingly as principles that are not diametrically opposed to what the society has.

Overemphasis on Certificates

This colonial curriculum in use lays much emphasis on certificates rather than on the skills or competences acquired or learned. This makes the whole process to lack pragmatic knowledge necessary for survival. Little wonder then after graduation these graduates are all encouraged to take up trainings in the centres for skills acquisition. The problem is that the graduates did not understand the language game which refers to the basic skills for survival which outlive all the certificates issued from the tertiary level of learning.

Education Administration and Leadership

School leadership is a core aspect of education. It is important that schools, in addition to the general goal of education should equally have their own particular goals that would address specific contextual issues that directly affect the geographical locus within which it lives and thrives without losing sight of the general relevance in a more expansive engagement. School leaders should constantly keep in view the educational goals of the school and ensure that the whole school organization is geared to the fulfillment of these aims and objectives.⁴⁹ School Managers/leaders in Nigeria occupy a unique position in our educational system. As educational leaders, they wield a considerable influence in the educational program of the country. School Managers/leaders, by and large are the agents, who execute or transmit general rules and regulations as laid down by the higher authorities. The curriculum, the system of instruction and school discipline are often handed down by a higher authority – that is, the appropriate Ministry of Education or School Board.⁵⁰ If the faith that the public has always had in education of children in Nigeria is to be resuscitated, new roles have to be defined for future trends in school leadership. Teachers and administrators alike now have to take responsibility for their individual evaluation and effectiveness. It is said that the success or failure of any enterprise or organization depends very much on the type and caliber of leadership and the role of leaders. Education is no exception.⁵¹

Knowledge and Learning Assessment

Knowledge and learning assessment are key to education. Students are expected to demonstrate to a reasonable standard, their comprehension and understanding capacity of the things they have been taught in school. This assessment is often based on the skills which the students have been taught. While in school, students are expected to learn intellectual, social, emotional, technical, leadership, and business skills. A Nigerian philosophy of education should contextualize the assessment of these skills. For example, with regard to business skills, universities and business schools across Nigeria could partner with local businesses and work out a formidable school curriculum that will integrate the 'nwa-boy'

apprenticeship into the formal education, whereby young boys undergoing the "nwa-boy" apprenticeship system would gain a degree or an MBA at the completion of their apprenticeship. Even though it is not yet part of the school curriculum, the 'nwa-boy' has been shown as a globally recognized effective system of business training and economic growth. To successfully train as 'nwa-boy' and begin a personal business is essentially pragmatic and can complement the MBA studies. The theories and skills learnt during an MBA are automatically translated into daily experience for the 'nwa-boy.' The same is applicable for other skills. The point is that the Nigerian school system ought to find a way of assessing and encouraging knowledge beyond its current mode. An important way of doing this is by undertaking a pragmatic and intellectual evaluation. Academic performance should be assessed by the ability of the students to demonstrate intellectual skills like:

- Uncover significant similarities and differences.
- Recognize contradictions, inconsistencies, and double standards.
- Refine generalizations and avoid oversimplifications.
- Create concepts, arguments, or theories.
- Classify issues, conclusions, or beliefs.
- Clarify and analyze the meanings of words or phrases.
- Develop criteria for the evaluation of values and standards.
- Evaluate credibility of sources of information.
- Compare analogous situations: transfer insights to new contexts.
- Contrast ideals with actual practice.
- Analyze or evaluate arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories.
- Generate actionable policies.
- Rethink our thinking: metacognition.
- Question deeply: raise and pursue root or significant questions.
- Make interdisciplinary, intradisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary connections
- Explore thoughts underlying feelings and feelings underlying thoughts.
- Design and carry out tests of concepts, theories and hypotheses.
- Reason dialogically: compare perspectives, interpretations, or theories.
- Reason dialectically: evaluate perspectives, interpretations, or theories.⁵²

Research Centers

Research centers are institutions where scientists conduct in-depth investigation into a wide range of issues. They are relevant and necessary because they are often the point of novel discoveries that enhance social progress. Given the limited knowledge of mankind, and the ongoing need for more discoveries, they provide the much-needed space for intellectual advancement. Just like in developed countries, Nigerian billionaires should find and fund research centers with their money for the growth of education in the country. These researches should focus on key problems like poverty, sickness, and political instability. Researchers and scientists with

⁴⁹Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 20,

⁵⁰Ibid 3.

⁵¹Halpin, A.W. *The Leadership behavior of school superintendent: The School Community Development Study*. California, Wardsworth pub, 1966, 151.

⁵² Paul R. *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a rapidly changing world*. Santa Rosa, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking. 1995, 312.

records of excellence should be encouraged and given the intellectual freedom to carry out their researches. Government should also encourage bright and talented students to pursue a career in these research centers.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This work began as an inquiry into how the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein could offer opportunities for educational growth to the Nigerian society. In order to do this, an acknowledgment that the Nigerian school system must develop a contextualized philosophy of education was established. This is supported by the Wittgenstein language game theory which is informed by his position on meaning in his later work in the *Philosophical Investigations* ordinarily known as later Wittgenstein. This theory argues for the need of meaning in context. This meaning in context provides a solid foundation for a Nigerian philosophy of education, especially considering the chaotic history of education in Nigeria. The key areas of this problematic history were identified, as well as a systematic way of addressing them. Nigeria needs a complete overhaul of her academic curriculum. The new curriculum should be built on a multicultural and contextual philosophy of education.

A fundamental step in this dimension is firstly, the renewal and promotion of learning in indigenous languages, and secondly a correct knowledge of history since education has to be grounded on a meaning that is firstly contextually rooted, as an expressive instance of the forms of life unique to the peculiarity of the particular people within a particular space. It is the exquisite method of expression and communication of the human experience. Its myriad manifestations among cultures and throughout time are a testament to the multitude of emotions, thoughts, ideas and creations of humankind. Human nature as a matter of fact is defined and expanded daily through the use of words. The study of language will involve its component parts, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.⁵³ The goal is to re-discover the original ideas and values of Nigerians before pre-colonialism, during colonialism and after colonialism, with the intention of cultivating a culture of synthesis that will be contributive to the growth and development of education in the Nigerian space.

The new curriculum ought to focus on contemporary social, intellectual, and moral challenges in the country for a holistic education. The goal is to have an education system that impacts on the country. The moral responsibility of the school, and of those who conduct it, is to be considered both on the micro level; equipment and empowerment of the individual and on the macro level; enhancement of a better society. The school is fundamentally an institution erected by the society to do a certain specific work - to maintain the life and advance the welfare of society.⁵⁴ This is a game that has to be played in response to the particular dynamics and unique demands of the particular operational locus with an eye to the common good in its larger consideration. This is what the new education curriculum in Nigeria should strive to achieve.

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