

Imperatives of the concept of education for liberation

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Abstract: This dialectical study explores the a priori basis of the concept of education for liberation. The study is dialectic given the nature of liberation. It is difficult to point out which philosophical underpinning best addresses the problem of liberation. However, inferring from St. Thomas's we find that formation of stable working society is one of the reasons for human existence. From Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative it is also clear that we should treat humanity either in our own persons or in the persons of others not only as a means but also as an end in itself. The study singles out utilitarianism and egalitarianism as the major conflicting philosophies in addressing the concept of liberation. From the two philosophies, it is argued that the best philosophical perspective is one that necessary implants in the people the desire to seek equality as a means and an end in their acts. The study demonstrates that utilitarianism leads to democratic capitalism while egalitarianism leads to cooperative socialism. Of the two philosophies, the study approves egalitarianism to be leading towards equality by virtue of it entrenching cooperative socialism. The study argues that democratic capitalism creates inequalities and classes in the society which are not in the realm of equality and as such disapproved from propagating liberation. The study recommends aligning education theories to egalitarianism to maximise on the actualisation of liberation among the recipients of education.

Keywords: education, philosophy, utilitarianism, egalitarianism, dialectic, equality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Liberation as a concept in education has been widely studied either by analysis or critique. However, there is a need for dialectical explanation of liberation as a concept in education to ascertain how the a priori basis of liberation justifies it's a posteriori basis. Liberation is defined as the act of gaining equal rights or full social, economic and political opportunities for an individual, group or a community (Shook, 2006). Liberating education is that type of education that frees individuals from incomplete truths and false perceptions that inform their decision making and transforming them to independent thinkers who are self-reliant and sociable (Maira, 2017). Education focuses on allowing learners to develop ideas and realise their abilities as participants in the process of establishing an ideal and stable society (Saleh, 2013).

Liberation as a theory of education is embedded upon the fact that education should focus on the contemporary society, probing lessons learnt through daily life experiences and peoples ways of life. A liberating education would thus enable people develop the capacity to check the existing assumptions through exercise of imagination and compassion which guides them to make value laden choices (Scott, 2013). It is this compassion that leads to what is termed to as a liberal thought. A liberal thought among people breeds the best social, economic and political environment for development and progress. It therefore holds that education should seek to equip the recipients with a liberal thought.

Many scholars have come up with their own concepts of liberation. Stuart Mill believes in utilitarianism, Marx; communism, Nkrumah; consciencism and Nyerere; Ujamaa (Nkrumah, 1970). With many concepts of liberation, pursuit of the same becomes otiose and thus the need to structure the imperatives upon which an ideal concept of liberation should be sought. This study seeks to give an exegesis of the a priori imperatives that necessarily guarantee any activity of education to be thought of leading towards liberation.

Problem statement

It is universally acknowledged that education has seen and guided societies to evolve from ancient to contemporary. Education has also aided in the improvement of social welfare of individuals, groups and societies. All this has been possible by virtue of education being liberating in nature. However, the concept of liberation has been warped to even include subjective idealism which endorses treatment of humanity as a means to a certain end and not as an end in itself. This subjective idealism justified by various social, political and economic theories has developed and entrenched itself as *sensus communis* and a well-established worldview in education. This has by extension perverted the concept of education for liberation. In this era of wealth creation, education should be the only voice of reason that can cool down the voracious appetite of individuals and nations that lead to the treatment of other humans or nations as a means to egocentric ends. This study elucidates bounds within which the process of education should operate to attain the aim of education for liberation.

Objectives

- i. explicate the ideals of the concept of liberation
- ii. propose a philosophy of education that maximises propensity for liberation

Methodology

Liberation as a theory of education has been depicted as a tool of social revolution and also an aim of any revolution. The nature of liberation as a theory opens it up to various conceptualizations. Liberation manifests in two polarities which are subjective and universal idealism. These subjective and universal concepts of liberation ordain different social, economic and political practices which are all claimed to emanate from liberation. It is by this contradiction that this study embraces dialectics which aims at synthesizing rationalism and empiricism and thus sufficiently resolving the contradictions.

Dialectics or dialectic is from Greek *dialektike* (related to dialogue) also known as the dialectical method. It is a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments (Corbett & Robert, 1999). In this study dialectic will aid move from an abstract-universal concept of liberation to the concrete-empirical concept. This will help discern the contradiction between the abstract concept and the concrete empirical concept. The contradiction will guarantee elucidation of negation in the abstract concept that grounds the concrete empirical concept. Through the dialectic process, the abstract concept and the concrete-empirical concept of liberation will be synthesised to give the imperatives of the concept of education for liberation.

Review of Related Literature

This study is a prolegomena endeavouring to assert an objective theoretical perspective that could guarantee liberation through the process of education. Education since time memorial has had an inherent attribute that is transcendental. This attribute is universally accepted as liberation and any process of education ranging from formal, non-formal and informal tends towards maximising the potential of liberation in individuals (Freire, 1973). The concept of liberation is torn between two conflicting schools of thought with one school pulling towards utilitarianism and the other school towards egalitarianism. It is observed that the best approach to determine the gradient of education with regard to liberation is the Kantian categorical imperatives. These give the benchmark upon which individuals relate to each other in their social, political and economic endeavours.

Kantian categorical imperative emphasise duty. Duty is the central philosophical concept in the deontological and moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant. It is a way of evaluating motivations for actions and denotes an absolute unconditional requirement that must be obeyed in all circumstances and is justified as an end in itself. This duty can be seen as a concern of one for all and all for one to attain equality. Categorical imperative treats equality as a means and an end. It therefore holds that the process of education should seek to instil the concept of equality among its recipients and that it is upon entrenchment of this concept among individuals such that their actions proceed and end with equality that it will be said education is liberating. If education by virtue of its nature entrenches inclination to other factors other than equality, then it tends to create weaknesses at microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. It creates weaknesses at microcosmic level by implanting ideals of superiority or inferiority among individuals. Treating others as inferior or superior is not within the praxis of equality. At macrocosmic level it creates social stratification with regard to economic and political power possessed by various social classes. Social stratification endorses inequalities and can thus not be a subset of equality. Thus an education which promotes inequalities will be an education for domestication as elaborated by Freire (1973).

It has been noted earlier that the concept of liberation ordains liberal thought in academia. It has also been discussed that there are two assertive strands in the liberal thought namely utilitarianism and egalitarianism. The application of these two strands in daily experiences of individuals would result to democratic capitalism for the earlier and cooperative socialism for the later (Nkrumah, 1970).

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that holds that the best action is one that maximises utility (Driver, 2004). It observes that it is the consequences or outcomes of actions that determine whether they are good or bad (Driver, 2004). Thus utilitarianism is a version of consequentialism which states that the consequences of any action are the standard of right or wrong. Utilitarianism takes two dimensions (Eggleston & Miller, 2014). These are; act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism maintains that choice should be made on that act that creates the greatest utility. Rule utilitarianism holds that specific actions are morally justified if they conform to moral laws and if their inclusion would create more utility than other possible rules or no rule at all. According to Bentham, utility is the sum of all pleasures that result from an action, minus the suffering of anyone involved in the action (Eggleston & Miller, 2014). It therefore focuses on the end which is maximising utility regardless of the means to the end.

Utilitarianism has three essential elements that must be vivid for an action or policy to be considered utilitarian (Eggleston & Miller, 2014). First, whether an action is right or wrong is determined solely by its consequences. Second, the value of the consequences of an action is assessed in terms of the amount of happiness caused. Lastly, in assessing the total happiness caused to a number of people, equal amounts of happiness are to have equal value and no one person's happiness has a greater value than that of another person.

The teleological nature of utilitarianism is express in all elements. In the first element, an action must lead to desirable consequences for it to be justified as right. If the outcomes of an action are not desirable then such an action is considered wrong. In this argument there is no justification for the means to the ends and can clearly be discerned that the end justifies the means. The second element reinforces happiness as a derivative of any action and that the propensity of happiness is what determines if such an action is right or wrong. However this happiness is not stated as to whether it is objective or subjective. Such an observation depicts utilitarianism as incipient hedonism. The third element then inclines the happiness conditionally towards subjectivity. Utilitarian belief in outcomes is underpinned on the basic assumption that it is only good actions, policies or acts that would lead to good outcomes. If an act brings happiness to the majority, then such an act is justifiably good. This is a precarious position since it does not set the conditions of happiness but depends on the approval of people which only observes goodness as intersubjective but denies it of its ontological and moral domains.

It cannot be denied that for any society to be stable then there should be happiness. Thus happiness is a primary condition in the stability of any given society. However, by acknowledging subjectivity in pursuance of happiness, utilitarianism endorses belief in intrinsic differences of worth among individuals. This would lead to subjection of one individual as a means to another individual's happiness. Treating one individual as a means to happiness will subjugate the happiness of such an individual to that of the pursuer. Such a state is morally wrong with regard to Kantian categorical imperatives. The first categorical imperative stipulates that "treat humanity either in your own person or in the person of others not just as a means but as an end in itself". A contradiction to this imperative would most likely lead to elitism. Elitism is the belief or attitude that individuals who form elite (a select group of people with certain ancestry, intrinsic quality, high intellect, wealth, special skills, or experience) are more likely to be constructive to the society as a whole and therefore deserve influence or authority greater than that of others (Tan, 2008). When this dominates, then social stratification is most likely to occur.

Social stratification caused by elitism would influence to a greater extent the informal Education and percolate into formal education. This would subject education to academic elitism where much attention and resources are given to those students who rank highly in particular fields (Tan, 2008). It could also lead to establishment of schools with regard to social strata where the wealthy will have their own schools that are thoroughly furnished while the poor will languish in schools with few resources.

Egalitarianism is from the French word *egal* which means equal (Julius, 2003). It is a philosophical paradigm that rests on a background idea that persons are equal in fundamental worth or moral status and that no specific individual should override others but should be considered as a worthwhile complement in the forces that bind the group. It is a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political and economic rights and privileges (Julius, 2003).

Egalitarianism takes two dimensions namely; instrumental and non-instrumental egalitarianism (Holtug, 2010). Instrumental egalitarianism values equality as a means to some independent specifiable end. This means that any policy or action should be evaluated with regard to equality, because it is that such an action or policy is founded on the basis of equality that it leads to an egalitarian end (Holtug, 2010). Non-instrumental egalitarianism values equality for its own sake as an end in itself (Holtug, 2010). This implies that all actions or policies should lead to equality among people and that there should be no privileges to some more than others.

The dimensions of egalitarianism open up to economic or material and political egalitarianism. Economic or material egalitarianism is where members of a society have equal standing and access to all the economic resources in terms of power, wealth and contribution (Holtug, 2010). Political egalitarianism on the other hand reiterates that members of a society are of equal standing in terms of political power or influence. This necessarily trickles from economic egalitarianism. Instrumental and non-instrumental egalitarianism when agglomerated would treat equality both as a means and an end. This means that all actions should proceed from equality and tend towards equality. When aiming at equality as a means and as an end, no macrocosmic weakness are created in the society. However, microcosmic weaknesses are inevitable in the sense that individuals are restrained from pursuing individual happiness. When pursuance of individual happiness is discouraged creativity and zeal for perfection is hindered among people.

II. PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

St. Thomas Aquinas holds that there are three supreme roles of humanity (Odhiambo, 1998). These are; preservation of life, propagation of species and formation of a stable working society. It is from the three that we obtain natural laws which predicate conventional laws. Plato on the other hand observes that humans comprise of the rational, spirited and the appetitive elements and that there is a continuous state of striking a balance between the elements by people and that no element should be subjugated by the other for a being to be ideal (Odhiambo, 1998). Consequently, as observed from Aquinas and Plato, humans are embroiled in a conflict of striking a balance in the triple elements and in most cases end up eschewing towards one or two.

From the three elements we can deduce those elements that we can call social, economic and political. It is the concern of striking a balance between the three elements that is a source of conflict and as such the driving force behind history of individuals, nations and the world. The elements must then have a conduit for their sustenance and propagation. In the attempt to maintain balance, education is conceived and serves as a means to maintaining the presupposed balance. It therefore holds that education will have social, economic and political aims. The synthesis of the three aims successfully begets a derivative termed to as liberation. If all the three aims are successfully inculcated in individuals then Freire's concept of conscientisation would be attained by the recipients of education.

It should be noted that the conflict between the elements also trickles to the process of education such that the process is seen to incline towards one aim more than others. The conflict seen in endeavours to strike a balance between the elements rejuvenates in the means utilized in the process of creating harmony. This conflict is characterised of continuous reforms of each reform endeavouring to establish its authority over the rest.

Social, economic and political realities affect the process of education and so does education affect these realities. The realities can influence the attainment of educational aims positively or negatively. Education can also guarantee the attainment of projected social, economic and political aims. However, education as a process is both formal and informal. Confucian opines that what you here you tend to forget, what you see you tend to remember, and what you do, you understand it better. Formal education stands for the first argument and partly second in form of simulations. Informal education represents the second argument in its proper sense and the third. It therefore holds that both formal and informal education are both in the praxes of education but informal education plays a vital role in the process of education.

Both formal and informal education participate in a contingency that is not mutually exclusive but of the form of a competitive union. In the union, it so happens that informal education has a higher density. This can properly be elucidated by the metaphysical principle of intelligibility which states that something is, in as much as it is cognizable. Intelligibility begins from experience, understanding then finally making of judgements (Mattei, 2007). Experiences tend to be more informal and given the fact that they form a foundation upon which judgements are made, they become more vital in the process of education and thus the claim that informal education has more density in the process of education. This being the case, it therefore holds that education is a tool of propagating status quo with respect to social, economic

and political realities of any given society. Thus for education to propagate change of social, political and economic realities, there is need for a revolution in all the realities which will then trickle to education because it is a derivative of these realities.

Education and liberation

From St. Aquinas, we discover that formation of a stable and functional society is one of the cardinal roles of humanity (Odhiambo, 1998). Society being such, it precedes and transcends its politics and economics. Economics is defined as the struggle by human beings to satisfy their needs with available scarce resources (Backhouse & Madema, 2009). It therefore holds that economic aims are elements in social aims. That the way a society sustains its wants with regard to economic resources, begets its economic aims. Politics is variously defined with regard to the context. This definition of economics begets a Marxist definition of politics as a struggle by various social classes for the control of economic resources (Basu, 2017). In the materialistic conception of history Marx observes that there is a continuous struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the control of factors of production and its this struggle that begets politics (Basu, 2017). It is therefore imminent that economic aims are necessary attributes of a society. As the society is transformed with regard to economic aims, political aims are derived. This exposes the fact that political aims are derivative to social aims with respect to economic aims.

The derivation of political aims from social and economic aims is necessitated by a dialectic process. These three aims are in a constant dialogue necessitating transformation of aims from one direction to the other depending on the disposition of the society. In this study this dialectic process is considered to be the process of education. This consideration does not come from the blues, but it is rather derived from the history of education. A good example is during the period of European renaissance. Here, education was utilized as a conduit to shift from religious conception of man with regard to heaven, to man's intellect as the centre of knowledge (Bamikole, 2012). All reforms and revolutions aiming at restructuring the society have manifested through education process. Thus, education being a point of intersection of social, economic and political aims of any given society, plays the role of the mind to the body without which the society will succumb to nihilism.

It has been discussed that the transformation of the society with respect to economic aims is what derives political aims of that society, and that education is the process that enables the transformation that leads to the derivation. It therefore holds that how the society is transformed economically leads to the formation of certain political theories and practices. These political theories and practices would either be despotic, democratic or other political practices that are evident in ancient and contemporary societies. This paper expresses the concept of liberating education in this democratic epoch and is limited to the extent to which the process of education may or may not be libertarian.

In the contemporary democratic era, utilitarianism and egalitarianism as theories of education are common and tend to function antagonistically. Just like Nkrumah (1970) observes, in a society where there are competing ideologies, one ideology, which is associated with the ruling class will always be dominant. As discussed earlier, the nature of utilitarianism inclines to predicating capitalism while egalitarianism incubates socialism. Education in the contemporary society is torn between disseminating capitalism or socialism. Reading from Marx it can be construed that capitalism is the dominant ideology which is constantly entrenching itself to attain its apogee, imperialism.

Reflecting upon capitalism, it is evident that it germinated in the period of enlightenment (Nkrumah, 1970). It is this anthropocentrism which served as the emancipating thought from religious shackles and the strengthening of capitalism (Bamikole, 2012). Man not God was the point of reference and thus being the centre and source of knowledge. Capitalism armed itself with a network of ancient philosophies which were in most cases perverted to suit the demands of capitalistic practices (Bamikole, 2012).

The Anaxagorean concept of the universe arising from the seeds was taken by Leibniz and refined to elucidate that the universe comprises of infinite number of units called monads (Mburu, 1986). Every monad is self-contained and enclosed from others. Each monad has a private law that governs it thus making monads different due to pre-established harmony (Mburu, 1986). It is this difference in the nature of monads that grounds exploitation making Leibniz's philosophy incline to democratic capitalism. The Protagoran dictum, *man is a measure of all things* was also warped to reflect subjective idealism and not universal idealism. The Protagoras credo was thus conceived to claim that reality is a replica of the subjective will.

Capitalism ordains pursuance of subjective pleasures. In so doing it permits ethical egoism. Utilitarianism as the bedrock of capitalism advocates for right or wrong being a derivative of consequences of policies or actions (Maira, 2017). This allows for the conception of a society from an economic viewpoint. This implies that it is the economic system that begets the social system and not the other way round. If economic emancipation precedes social stability, then exploitation is inevitable. An education system that disposes its recipients to capitalistic tendencies, ingrains in them a concept of wealth as a necessary element in the maximisation of happiness. This happiness should serve as the consequence of their actions. Since this happiness is subjectively idealistic, it therefore holds that every human being has to assert their personal and independent dignity. Such a position is detrimental to the society and an education that seeks to entrench such a system seeks to annihilate the society rather than transform it for the better. It will therefore be observed that education dressed in utilitarianism to propagate democratic capitalism is not a liberating education but rather a conduit of propagating imperialism.

Egalitarianism on the other hand reinforces the essence of equality among people as a means or as an end in itself (Holtug, 2010). This equality should be the social element from which the economic and political aims should proceed. This does not denote that egalitarianism is opaque to individual differences. According to Nkrumah (1970), egalitarianism acknowledges differences among people at the functional level but not in their intrinsic worth. It is an absolute explanation of the Anaxagorian principle which emphasises socialistic responsibility of each for all and all for each (Nkrumah, 1970). Egalitarianism arms its argument with Descartes belief that reason is the same in all people and that they share public universal truths which they pursue (Driver, 2004). The state is therefore founded upon an interdependence of people pursuing the same goal (James, 1996). Formation of a stable society being a cardinal function of humanity, equality is a necessary bedrock. Where equality is absent, there exists differences which work in opposite directions of stability. Egalitarianism being pursuance of equality as a means and as an end, serves as a pillar of a stable society.

If a society is stable, it then holds that economic endeavours of that particular society will proceed from equality as a means and an end in the satisfaction of human wants using the available resources. If the process of production and distribution of resources in a society is founded on egalitarianism, and having observed that politics is a derivative of social aims with respect to economic aims, then the political aims will also begin and end in pursuit of equality.

Egalitarianism will thrive if there is equality among people. It is this equality that will give rise to unity that is required in the process of forming a stable society. Egalitarianism thus approves of cooperative socialism as a theory that can guarantee stability in any given society. This study by observing weakness of democratic capitalism, holds that it is unstable due to the differences among people that manifest in social classes and cannot lead to liberation but only domestication. Cooperative socialism founds equality in the society and tries to eliminate social classes therefore guaranteeing stability. When a society is stable, it will establish a stable economic and political system.

Libertarian paradigms

The process of education is not egalitarian if the pedagogical approaches are not founded from the pursuit of equality. Having observed that its cooperative socialism propagated by an egalitarian education that maximises the desire for a stable society, it holds that the methods of propagation must themselves be egalitarian. The process of education is a crucial determinant in the achievement of the objectives of education. Liberation cannot be achieved when the process used undermines liberation. The approaches employed in education should be liberating enough to lead to liberated individuals. Thus methodologies employed in propagating education should proceed and tend towards equality. Equally the methods should reinforce the need for stability of the society.

Liberation will be attained through education if there is economic, social and political harmony among people. Consequently, pedagogy (art and science of teaching) and andragogy (art and science of helping adults to learn) must be fashioned to reflect equality as a means and end of the process of education (Chitumba, 2013). To ensure that there is congruency between what is taught and skills required in the job market, there is need to intensify ergonagy (art and science of helping people learn to work) (Bangura, 2005). Heutagogy (study of self-determined learning) is another approach that would necessitate both economic and social liberation as it waters down the tendency of elitism among scholars and humbles them to become selfless service providers to the society.

Heutagogy first of all molds learners to be problem solvers and consultants in charge of improvements. Second, it enables educational stakeholders to appreciate the critical role of learners in the learning process. Lastly it allows learners to develop confidence in their perceptions of reality and critique their beliefs within a framework of competence. However, self-determined learning should not be confused to pursuance of egocentric pleasures, but must be structured to propagate equality as the predetermined end. Lastly from the Ubuntu Philosophy (African philosophy that emphasizes treatment of other people with humanity), we get ubuntu-gogy as a paradigm in education (Chitumba, 2013). Ubuntu-gogy is an art and science of teaching and learning undergirded by humanity towards others (Bangura, 2005). It molds individual to be God fearing, consensus builders and problem solvers through dialogue which helps in stabilizing a society.

III. CONCLUSION

Education as a process of social stability will achieve its predetermined aim of liberating recipients if it disposes them to egalitarianism. This means that the recipients should be able to pursue equality as a means and end in their social, economic and political activities. Pursuance of equality as a means and end amounts to cooperative socialism. This is what grounds a stable society. It therefore holds that, that which leads to the establishment of a stable society, should be in itself liberating. Consequently, that which creates weaknesses that negate stability in a society is in itself oppressive. Utilitarianism grounds democratic capitalism which leads to imperialism. Thus education underpinned on capitalism grooms imperialists who uphold exploitation. Egalitarianism on the other hand grounds equality as a basis of social stability. When a society is anchored on equality it will then follow that equality will be reflected in both economic and political activities. Therefore pursuit of education will be disposed to seeking equality as a means and an end. Equality being the means and end of social, economic and political activities will strike a balance in the aims of education and no aim will override others. Thus an egalitarian education is necessarily a liberating education. The recipients of education will be liberated if they acquire an egalitarian education

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