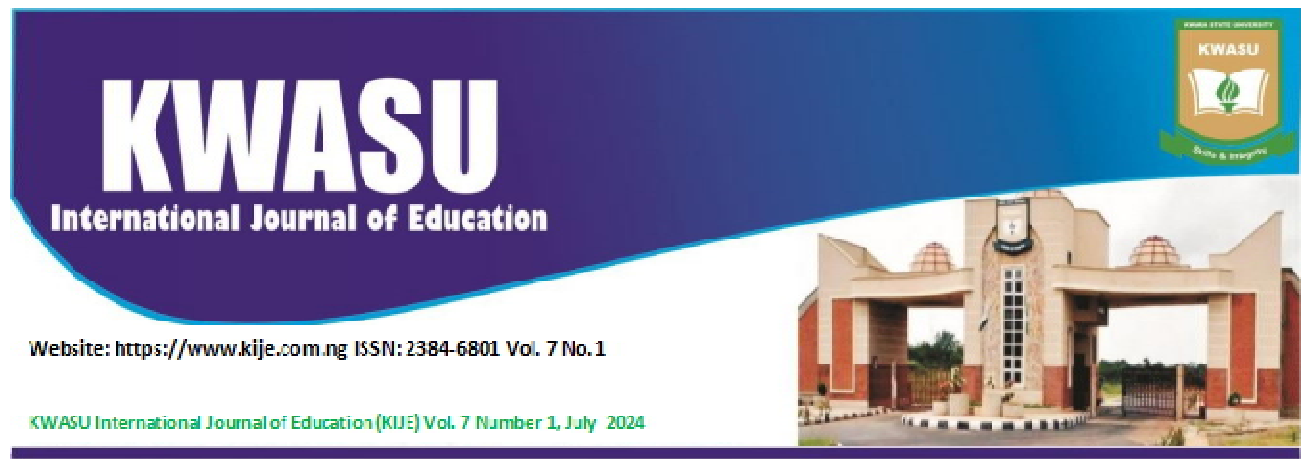




A PHILOSOPHICAL CLARIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study made a critical examination of knowledge as an objective of education in the Nigerian National Policy on Education, highlighting the need for philosophical clarification. Through a critical analysis of the policy document and relevant literature, this research identified ambiguities and inconsistencies in the understanding of knowledge, which hinder the effective implementation of the policy. By employing philosophical tools and concepts, this study clarifies the meaning of knowledge, based on the fact that education can be used as an instrument of social transformation and reconstruction through the promotion of viable knowledge as spelled out in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. It raises little or no doubt that the national policy on Education is a statement of education intentions pre-designed to breed physical, social, and economic development through the development of individual attitudes, norms, and skills to foster continuously the wellbeing of mankind. Consequently, the concept of knowledge in relation to mind, skills, values, and attitude should serve as the basic concepts of clarification, since it would enable stakeholders to dislodge the gaps between theory and practice of education and hence breed better commitment or adherence to the issue of knowledge in the policy. This research contributes to the ongoing debate on the nature of knowledge and its implications for education policy and practice. The paper recommended, amongst other things, that our programs of education should be directed towards positive applications of knowledge as value-oriented.

Keywords: *National Policy on Education, Conceptual Clarification, Knowledge, Objective and Education.*

Introduction

It is incontrovertible that the acquisition of knowledge plays a great and prominent role in the development of individuals and nations. Education is the bedrock of knowledge. Hence, one can opine that the fundamental goal of education is to transmit and equip individuals with knowledge and skills necessary for social and political development. The Nigerian education system faces numerous challenges, including philosophical, ideological, and policy inefficiencies, which affect the degree of commitment and proper implementation (Ejioneme, L. K. & Ozuoko, A. N., 2007). Prominent among these challenges is the wrong or negative application of knowledge by stakeholders, including government, Ministry of Education, Teaching Service Commission, and even students. Such wrong applications can be observed in areas such as corruption, malpractice, overcharging of WAEC or NECO registration fees by principals, negligence of duty by stakeholders, and various forms of rule-breaking. This calls for the proper inculcation of moral values into the minds of educators (Iheoma, 2013).

Morals and value education are essential for achieving overall development of citizens, who are expected to be the main drivers of change and transformation of human society (Cyril, 2014). Nigeria cannot afford to toy with knowledge as an objective, which serves as the nucleus of her education system, as the country's progress, peace, and wealth depend on the available human resources. Education has been recognized as a means of fostering political, economic, and social changes.

This paper briefly explores the meaning and history of the Nigerian National Policy on Education. The national policy on education is a document stating the government's objectives for various aspects of education in Nigeria. It outlines the government's plan for providing relevant education to Nigerian citizens. The policy has its roots in the National Curriculum Conference of 1969, which formed a criteria line for the objectives of curriculum for various levels and types of education in the country. The policy's borrowed guidelines were agreed upon in the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. In April 1972, General Yakubu Gowon promised that a National Policy on Education would be provided for the nation. In December 1972, the then-National Education Council (NEC), now (NERDC), attempted to draft a committee report on what was to become the Nigerian National Policy on Education. Structurally, the 6-3-3-4 system of education represents the number of years a child will normally spend at various levels of education. This includes six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary school, three years of senior secondary school, and four years of tertiary education. On September 20th, 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo, making the first nine years of education free and compulsory throughout Nigeria.

The national policy on education regards education as an instrument of change, especially in the intellectual and social outlook of society. The learners are expected to improve both in learning and character as a result of training their minds. The major target of education is the acquisition of knowledge. The national policy on education is tailored towards achieving the following national objectives:

- a) A free and democratic society
- b) a just and egalitarian society
- c) A united, strong, and self-reliant nation
- d) A great and dynamic economy
- e) A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FGN, 2024)

The philosophy emphasizes the need for values of freedom, justice, and egalitarianism to make everyone feel a sense of belonging. Judging from the above objectives, the policy stresses that Nigeria is a

sovereign state where her nationhood is greater than any other group or person. This paper seeks to undertake a clarification of the concept of knowledge in our national policy on education to diagnose how they are framed and organized to form the nucleus and reasonable base of our educational system.

Statement of the Problem

The National Policy on Education serves as a fundamental document that aims to provide a framework for education in Nigeria. However, the concept of knowledge underlying the policy remains ambiguous and philosophically unclear, thereby needing more clarification to shed light on the meaning of knowledge. This ambiguity is the root cause of the existing gaps between theory and practice, or between what ought to be and what is. The survival of any nation depends on the extent or fruitfulness of the adequacy and quality of positive knowledge application, which represents the quality of output as stipulated by the Nigerian National Policy on Education. One may ask: Are there realities being perceived or experienced that are not present in the Nigerian National Policy on Education? Secondly, are there any links, positive or negative, between knowledge and our national policy on education? It is therefore necessary to clarify the concept of knowledge spelled out in the national policy on education to shed more light on its meaning, as the nucleus of our educational system.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- 1.to clarify the concepts of knowledge in the Nigeria national policy on education and diagnose how they are framed and accurately organized to form a unified and reasonable based our educational programs.
- 2.to root-out the place of knowledge in our national policy on education.
- 3.to examine the possibility of throwing more light on the logical position of the concepts of knowledge as the nucleus of the objectives of our national policy on education in Nigeria.

Methodology

The methodology of approach used in this research is conceptual clarification. This involves explaining the meaning of knowledge as the nucleus of the objective in the Nigerian national policy on education. This method of analysis is necessary as it is characterized by the clarification of concepts to examine the use, misuse, and abuse of words, and to discover new grounds of knowledge as deemed fit.

Concept of knowledge

The problem of knowledge is central to education because it is closely related to the nature and essence of man and man's rationality. In the process of educating, we impart knowledge through teaching and learning. Man acquires knowledge every day for the purpose of information and reformation of individuals who, in turn, reform society. Okafor (1988) opines that the problem of epistemology (the question of what humans can know and how validity we can know things) is central to both philosophy and education.

This lends credence to the view that knowledge involves complex cognitive processes, reasoning, communication, and perception, as well as a two-dimensional process. Towoju (2016) states that the two-dimensional experience of knowledge can be tagged as the known and the knower... there is no knowledge apart from the knower and equally no knowledge apart from something to be known. Judging from the above, the subject and object form a continuum rather than a dichotomy as they relate

in the process of educating. It is a fact that I am part of this world, and I can know it. I am not something apart, likewise you. We know with our whole body, not only with our senses. Every instance of object knowledge is a complex totality with multiple relations to the rest of reality, and to which the knower brings much to himself. In line with Ayeni (2016), both education and philosophy seek knowledge and experience...education, as scientifically practiced, seeks to establish knowledge and experience through teaching and learning, while philosophy seeks to investigate knowledge.

In this wise, one can view knowledge as familiarity with someone or something relative to individual mind. In the process of familiarization, experiences are used in reading meaning to every idea collected through the senses as the mind interprets it to be.

The necessary logical deductions here are that knowledge can be thought of:

- i. as recognition, which is the repetition of cognitive awareness that can lead to internalization of learning
- ii. as an encounter by a learner with an object of learning and the internalization of such encounter
- iii. as the properties of sensible ideas which are intelligibly acquired by man through the tools of learning and experience such as intellect and the likes.

The transmission of viable knowledge in sequential stages is the special function of schools. To make individuals who acquire good knowledge through education good citizens of Nigeria and protect the country's interest, the concept of knowledge was introduced in our national policy on education as a national concept of knowledge.

In the national policy on education, our education was generally recognized as an instrument of change through the provision of knowledge planned to be impacted into learners.

The following concepts of knowledge were therefore included in our Nigeria national policy on education:

- i. the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- ii. the inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual in Nigerian society
- iii. the training of the mind in understanding the world around
- iv. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of their society (NPE 2024).

In summary, the process of acquiring knowledge through education is possible because the knowing power of individual learners and teachers' intellects vitally reacts to the impressions received and entertained in consciousness, which is the act of knowing. This explains why knowledge acquisition is a special activity of education. The philosophical concepts of knowledge in the national policy on education can be clarified to provide more insight and resolve ambiguity and inconsistency as follows:

The Inculcation of National Consciousness and National Unity

In the National Policy on Education, one of the major areas of our educational concerns in the field of knowledge is the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity. In education, knowledge enhances the spiritual growth of the person towards self-realization, self-consciousness, self-determination, self-direction, and self-operation, which are the main targets for greater and normal

development. This breeds national consciousness, leading to national unity. This is the principle of national belonging, humility, generosity, and growth of good character. Consciousness means an explicit reflection of our subjective and objective state of awareness as "self". For example, "I am aware that I am aware" is a reflection of self by self and through self. This enables me to examine my conscious acts and myself. Note that conscience is not the same as conscious but is restricted to part of conscience, meaning the awareness of moral right or wrong. Cooley (1969) states that education should train individuals not only as individuals but also as members of a community and nation. They should be trained as citizens, and education should be used as a tool for national unity. Now more than ever, it is argued that we should inculcate in students the idea of belonging not to one clan or tribe but to the whole nation.

This aligns with the objectives of education in the Nigerian national policy on education, emphasizing "national consciousness and national unity" and "faith in man's ability to make rational decisions". This highlights the value of knowledge in the Nigerian educational system. Teaching should promote rational understanding and genuine knowledge; otherwise, it would be considered indoctrination rather than education.

Inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of individual in Nigeria society

The Nigerian National Policy on Education makes provision for knowledge that will inculcate the right types of values and attitudes in learners, enhancing good quality output from its educational programs. These values and attitudes are based on the needs and problems of society, making the policy a comprehensive document seeking to reform Nigerian educational programs in all aspects. The two positive applications of knowledge here are the "right types of values and attitudes" for the survival of Nigerian society. The concept of "right" can be analyzed in relation to "wrong," but can values be wrong? This is because "wrong" implies a negative notion, and all values are perceived as right to the valuers since values are inscribed with goodness. These values imply the worth we give to our ideas or events that can promote individual development and enhance peaceful living in society.

Regarding attitudinal development, Ayeni (2016) claims that attitude is normally used to refer to a learned predisposition evidenced in an individual's behavior to evaluate an object or claims of objects in a consistent or characteristic way. This implies an effective state of mind of an individual person. For example, we can say, "Mr. John's attitude to work is good" or "Mr. John's attitude to others is bad." Hence, attitudes relate to human behavior or ways of life. The values to be promoted will breed "right attitudes of the mind." The minds of learners should be trained to be considerate of others' needs and feelings in their development.

The knowledge of good attitudes in the National Policy on Education implies that "ourself" should be placed in the position of "otherself." The personal values to be developed are honesty, humility, discipline, responsibility, hard work, and these are the values that will help extol freedom, justice, equality, and democracy.

The Training of the Mind in the understanding of the World Around

In our national policy on education, one of our national concepts of knowledge is the training of the "mind" in understanding the world around. This means that training in our educational programs is directed at targeting the mind of individuals. Training has much in common with conditioning, as it is used in developing attitudes, habits, and skills, all of which are subjects of the mind. Oladosu (2001) states that training involves acquiring specific skills in a specific area of specialization. Additionally, it

is through training that professionals like teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, drivers, and others acquire knowledge in their respective areas of specialization.

In education, the mind refers to the seat of consciousness, encompassing the sum of streams of activities such as awareness or experience going on in individuals. This means that when we refer to the mind, we are talking about our mental powers, especially the power of understanding or intellect. This is precisely what our educational goals aim at. Through the power of my "mind", I can relate to other objects in the world. I recognize myself as existing and having some identity, which sets me apart from yet connects me to others. When our eyes look at an object, it is the mind that combines the impressions received and forms them into concepts and ideas. The mind acts from "within out", interpreting sensations and directing movement. Wingo (2016) notes that our behavior is self-directed, not merely a response to the pressure of the material world. We have the ability to rise above environmental pressures and seek good, even when it's the harder path to follow.

The development of spiritual values originates mainly from the "mind", making it the "foodstuff of knowledge" in education. The fact that human nature remains one being, despite various roles and activities, reveals that the powers of the mind in human beings can be self-directed. The mind is at the center of knowledge acquisition, receiving and translating ideas, relating them to other ideas or data of experience. This aligns with the philosophy of idealism, which posits that "ideas are of the mind". In the national policy on education, training the mind to understand the world is essential because humans need others for perfect self-fulfillment and realization of their potential. The power of understanding and choice behavior characterizes persons, enabled by the mind's ability to translate and relate.

The Acquisition of Appropriate Skills needed for the Development of Individual in the Society

As spelled out in the national policy on education, education in Nigeria should encompass a broad type of knowledge aimed at acquiring skills considered desirable in Nigerian society. Our concept of knowledge in the national policy on education, referred to as the instrument of change, contains "the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical, and social abilities and competencies as equipment for individuals to live in and contribute to the development of society." On the concept of "skills," the learning of skills is based on the principle that with enough practice, performance improves to the extent that it becomes easy, efficient, and automatic. For example, skills like drawing, running, reading, philosophizing, swimming, crafting, and computation can all be attained proficiently through persistent and constant practice. Farrants (1988) states that skills are activities requiring coordination between mind and body. The more our behavior incorporates skills, the more our minds can be freed for truly intellectual and creative activities in life. Hence, every learner is capable of genuine initiative. This is because living is more influential in determining thinking than thinking in determining living. Physical and manipulative skills are very important. Manipulative skills learned by the learner's conscious mind free them to exercise their creative power, while physical skills aid in strong physical development, enabling individuals to move away from danger or towards good. The Nigerian National Policy as a whole is a unified synthesis that can be implemented in its entirety or in part without compromising its seriousness as a policy. The fact is that the formal and non-formal sections of the policy are supposed to be closely integrated if the policy is to fulfill its objectives of national unity and harmony.

Conclusion

The national policy on education contains the essence of the present-day concept of knowledge that can breed national survival and peaceful living, provided it is faithfully interpreted and

implemented. The clarification of its contents of knowledge will explicitly make the policy a whole, a synthesis that can be implemented in bits and processes without jeopardizing its success as a policy. The clarification will actualize an effective and functional solidification of knowledge that will surely accelerate the achievement of social reconstruction, social change, and national development as deemed fit.

Recommendation

Based on the clarification of the concept of knowledge in the national policy, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. For the effective implementation of the national policy on education, our educational programs should be directed towards the positive applications of knowledge to transform the human and material nature in Nigeria. Hence, there is a need for more orientation on the positive use of knowledge in exercising choices. This would shed more light on our national conception of knowledge in the national policy on education.
2. The reform of the policy should be directed towards the positive application of knowledge that would solve the problems of the current situation as they emerge. New challenges, such as the use of artificial intelligence, should be incorporated positively into the national policy on education as a knowledge base to teach the essence of education.

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