

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NIGERIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM: HOW RELEVANT CAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION BE?

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Abstract

Education is basically concerned with knowledge, skills, competences and understanding for purpose of human development and for building resilient social, economic, and political structures for strong and vibrant economy. The paper discussed artificial intelligence and Nigeria's education system in relation to how relevant philosophy of education with focus on philosophical analysis, clarification, and exploration. The paper observed that philosophy of education can play a significant role to artificial intelligence driven education system by critically examining the nature and processes of human knowledge and how it can be acquired using the philosophical scalpel of critical analysis, criticism and justification. It further discovered that education is subject to philosophical perspectives of ethical and moral concern in order to ensure that artificial intelligence mediated education conforms to ethical and pedagogical standards. Furthermore, constructivist philosophies of education that emphasize learning as an active and socially driven process of knowledge construction based on student experiences have been adduced to impact on artificial intelligence to enhance learning through collaborative learning, feedback, and exploration. Philosophy of education is challenged by foreign orientation and poor educational planning. There is therefore the need for educational policy planning to ensure quality education at all levels of the school system, basing education according to needs, and interest of students, and ensuring a flexible, relevant, dynamic and comprehensive education system. The paper concludes that philosophy of education is necessary in artificial intelligence education to ensure that learning, knowledge, ethics and human values are not replaced with artificial technologies.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Philosophy, Education, and Human Values.

Introduction

Education is a nation's most highly priced instrument for national development in the areas of social, economic, and cultural aspirations Akinpelu (2005:131) believes that "a system of education is better discussed and guided and effectively achieves its objectives if the philosophical bases are stated in clear terms for everybody to see". This calls for quality education in Nigeria. First it is considered necessary here that for a meaningful investigation of what qualitative education is all about, the criteria under which it can be identified should be clearly and precisely stated. Suffice it therefore, to say that one way of stating qualitative education is to ask the question: what do we expect of qualitative education for our children, our families, our community, our local government system and the entire Nigerian society? It can therefore, be proposed that qualitative education can be reflected in the observable behaviours and performance of the products of the educational system.

Philosophy of education can refer to the process of philosophizing in education and the product of that activity; that is, it is both analytic and speculative. It must be concerned with a critique of the philosophical assumptions of the existing educational system and practice from the stand point of compatibility, consistency and adequacy in the light of the growing body of human knowledge. This is the analytic aspect. Philosophy of education is also concerned with developing a positive conception of what education ought to be in the light of as much information about man, society, and the universe as he can muster from all available areas of experience and knowledge. This is the speculative aspects of philosophy. Both the analytic and the speculative activities must be combined to make philosophy of education relevant to the needs of the Nigerian society. In simple terms, philosophy of education refers to the use of philosophical tools, theories, principles and methods for the elucidation and solution of

educational problems. (Aminigo & Nwaokugha, 2006). The main task of philosophy of education is the systematic and critical analysis and clarification of concepts, issues and propositions in educational practice in order to use these tools to find solution to educational problems.

Nigerian philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system” (NPE, 2014:7). Nigerian engagement in education is aimed at achieving these goals, inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and 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 his society (FRN, 2014). The ideals of the National Policy on Education are for the citizens to be free, just and to live in a democratic society. The implication of this provision is that the Nigerian education is founded on the principles of freedom, justice and equality.

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, particularly computer systems. These processes include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding. The field of AI has evolved significantly since its conception in the mid-20th century, leading to numerous applications across various industries. The core components of artificial intelligence include, machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), computer vision (CV) and robotics (Sciliano & Khatib, 2016). Its application in education includes interactive learning environment, language development, intelligent tutoring systems, behavioural analysis, monitoring and evaluation, personalized learning, and ethical considerations.

The Nigerian philosophy of education is primarily concerned with the search for meaning in human life. This means that intelligible and critical answers about the nature of human existence and the nature of the world in which we live are needed. In simple terms, the philosophical enterprise is involved in considering the nature of human knowledge, and human problems in so far as they are important to all of us through careful and critical examination (Okere, 2015). This underpinning means that information and beliefs about the nature of the universe and the world of human life are of utmost concern to the philosopher of education because through their analyses, the philosopher can arrive at general, systematic, coherent and consistent body of knowledge aimed at having a clear understanding of the situation of things. This paper therefore, investigates the relationship between artificial intelligence systems and Nigerian education by critically examining the impact of philosophy of education.

Philosophy of Education: Past and Present

Philosophy of education is primarily concerned with the analysis of meanings and contexts involving educational issues. In general terms, education can be framed within two major paradigms of traditional and modern with distinct perspectives on knowledge, teaching methods, and the role of the teacher and the learners. Traditional education philosophers are rooted in centuries-old practices, often influenced by classical theories of knowledge and pedagogy. These include, the perennialists, essentialists and behaviourists.

- 1. Perennialism:** This is rooted in the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Perennialists hold that education should focus on enduring ideas and universal truths. The goal is to foster rational thinking, moral virtue, and intellectual development through the study of classical texts (Okere, 2021). The teacher in this model is seen as an authority figure whose role is to impart knowledge that is timeless and universally relevant. Plato’s educational philosophy was aimed at making each person perform

most competently and most efficiently the function and the division to which he belongs. He believed that education should enable the individual to have right of participation, discussion, and decision making. He further stated that education should promote social justice and social harmony, and that equal educational opportunity should be provided for both men and women based on natural abilities in an environmentally friendly atmosphere devoid of social evils and corruptive influences. He recognized three principles in education which include, professional preparation, division of labor, and reconstruction of social, political and economic structures. Plato believed that education is ultimately connected to democracy.

For Aristotle, education should cultivate intellectual and moral values in the individual to live a morally good and happy life. Education should enable human beings discover knowledge and truth and for cultivating the virtues of good citizenship. Education should lead to self-sufficiency and should emphasize self-reliance; the development of physical skills, child-centered education, political dimension and governance, provision of basic science subjects, such as physics, biology, and metaphysics. For Socrates (470-399 B.C) systematic theory of teaching and learning using the Socratic methods of questioning and clarification. He emphasizes the importance of knowledge to virtue and right conduct and understanding. He believed that education is connected to morality and goodness helping the individual to cultivate the principles of temperance, justice, courage, wisdom and loyalty. The Socratic method of inquiry and dialogue are emphasized which enables the individual to cross-examine himself in the light of new information and knowledge.

2. **Essentialism:** A response to the perceived moral and intellectual decay in society. Essentialism advocates for a return to a core curriculum of essential knowledge in the subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and science (Bagley, 1934). In this model, teachers play an authoritative role in transmitting knowledge while students are expected to conform to established standards and norms. The emphasis is on mastery of basic skills and academic rigour, with an underlying belief that education should prepare students to be productive citizens. (Becker, 2017).
3. **Behaviourism:** Behaviourism, influenced by psychologist such as B.F. Skinner, focuses on observable behaviours and the idea that learning occurs through conditioning. Behaviourists advocate for a structured and controlled environment where positive reinforcement is used to encourage desirable behaviours and academic achievement. Education, from a behaviourist perspective, is about reinforcing desired outcomes through repetition and rewards.

On the other hand, modern philosophies of education emerged in response to the limitations of traditional approaches, particularly the increasing need for educational systems to adapt to a rapidly changing and diverse society. These philosophies emphasize active, student-centered learning, with a focus on fostering critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. These philosophies include, progressivism, constructivism, critical pedagogy, and post modernism.

- **Progressivism.** Progressivism, closely associated with John Dewey, emphasizes the importance of student experience in the learning process. Dewey argued that education should be relevant to the students' lives and should prepare them to actively participate in a democratic society. In progressive education, students are encouraged to engage in inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, and critical reflection, rather than merely memorizing facts. Progressivism is praised for promoting critical thinking, creativity, and democratic engagement. However, critics argue that it can be too unstructured, making it difficult to maintain academic rigor or meet standardized testing requirements. Furthermore, some critics believe that the emphasis on student choice may not adequately prepare students for careers or future education (Henderson, 2012).
- **Constructivism.** This philosophy is influenced by cognitive theorists like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky who posit that learners construct their own understanding of the world based on their

experiences. In a constructivist classroom, teachers facilitate learning by creating environments in which students can engage in active problem-solving and discovery. Knowledge is viewed as something constructed through interaction with the environment, rather than being passively received. Constructivism is a student centered learning theory that is based on cumulatively building understandings from students' prior experiences and knowledge. In other word to continue the construction analogy, learning becomes a process of constructing new knowledge on the foundation of what is already known. Essentially, learning is placed in a familiar context and aims to translate abstract theories into relational concepts. In the classroom situation, constructivists approach to learning means engaging the students to relate back to real-world experiences and provide an association between the old and new information. Constructivist classroom promotes: active learners; democratic environment; interactive activities; student-centered and cumulative learning environment based on cognitive process of the mind such as thinking, recall and problem solving. Constructivism encourages deep engagement and helps develop independent, critical thinkers. It also fosters collaboration and the integration of knowledge across disciplines. However, critics argue that constructivism may be difficult to implement effectively in large, diverse classrooms, and may not always provide the structure necessary for students to master fundamental skills (Pritchard, 2009).

- **Critical Pedagogy:** Critical pedagogy, popularized by Paulo Freire, is concerned with education as a tool for social transformation. This approach challenges traditional power structures and aims to promote social justice and equity through education. Freire argued that education should empower students to question and challenge the status quo, addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and racism. It emphasizes dialogue, critical thinking, and the development of a socially conscious, active citizenry. Critical pedagogy is recognized for its commitment to social justice and for empowering marginalized groups. However, it has been critiqued for its political orientation and the potential for it to become ideological rather than educational. Some critics also argue that it can be difficult to implement effectively in educational systems that prioritize neutrality or academic achievement (Giroux, 2011).
- **Postmodernism.** Postmodern educational theories challenge the notion of universal truths and objective knowledge, focusing instead on the role of culture, language, and power in shaping learning. Postmodernism in education encourages teachers and students to critically examine the narratives and structures that define knowledge and authority. It often emphasizes diversity, multiplicity, and the fluidity of knowledge, encouraging students to explore various perspectives. This philosophy is noteworthy for encouraging critical thinking and highlighting the diversity of perspectives. However, its rejection of absolute truths can be seen as relativistic, leading to ambiguity and a lack of clear educational goals. Some argue that this approach can undermine the development of shared knowledge or common standards, potentially creating confusion and undermining academic rigor (Lyotard, 1984).

From the foregoing discussions on traditional and modern philosophies of education, it can be argued that philosophy of education is critical with thinking about how education can best serve the needs of the society. Educational philosophers not only outline in succinct terms the strategies for ensuring the functionality and worthwhileness of education but also pedagogical implications of philosophy to teachers and learners. Educational philosophy can logically and impartially assess issues relating to educational theories and practices (Nwosu, 2013).

Nigerian philosophy of education has evolved over time, influenced by the country's historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. The past and present aspects of Nigerian education can be analyzed by

looking at the major philosophical influences and how educational practices have been shaped by indigenous traditions, colonialism, and post-independence aspirations.

1. The Traditional or Indigenous Philosophy of Education (Pre-colonial Era)

Before the advent of formal Western education, indigenous education systems in Nigeria were deeply rooted in the cultural and social contexts of various ethnic groups. In traditional African societies, including Nigeria, education was primarily practical and community-centered, focusing on moral and social development. The following features were preponderant: Communal and Holistic Education: Education was a communal activity involving the family, elders, and the larger community. It was centered on preparing the child for adult life through apprenticeship, storytelling, rites of passage, and informal learning.

- **Practical Knowledge:** Children learned skills that were necessary for survival and social functioning—such as farming, hunting, trading, arts, music, and crafts—while also gaining spiritual knowledge and wisdom from elders.

- **Moral and Social Education:** There was an emphasis on moral uprightness, respect for elders, and community values. The goal was to create responsible and virtuous members of society.

Although formal schooling did not exist, education was considered a vital part of life and was aimed at fostering a strong sense of community, duty, and respect for one's heritage.

2. The Colonial Education System (19th - Early 20th Century)

With British colonial rule came the introduction of formal Western education, which significantly altered Nigeria's educational landscape. The colonial education system was based on European models, particularly that of Britain, with a focus on producing a small elite class to assist in the administration of the colony. Key features can be identified as follows:

- **Eurocentric Education:** The curriculum emphasized British history, literature, and values, largely neglecting indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions. This system was geared toward creating a colonial workforce that could serve the interests of the British Empire.
- **Limited Access:** Education was primarily reserved for the elite, with very few schools and resources available for the majority of the population. Missionary schools played a significant role in this period, focusing on religious indoctrination along with basic education.
- **Elitism and Inequality:** The colonial education system reinforced social hierarchies and inequalities, as it was designed to serve the needs of the colonial administration rather than the broader Nigerian society.

3. Post-Independence Education (1960 - Present)

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, there was a push to transform the education system to reflect the country's diverse cultural and socio-political realities, while also addressing the issues of national unity, economic development, and social justice.

- **National Philosophy of Education:** The Nigerian government has emphasized education as a tool for effecting national development, unity, and modernization (FRN, 2014). The National Policy on Education (NPE), first formulated in 1977 and revised several times since, has sought to align education with national goals.

Key principles of the NPE include:

- i. **Integration of National Ideals:** Education is expected to promote national unity, social equity, and a sense of belonging to one's community and country.

- ii. **Focus on Skills and Competencies:** The policy stresses the importance of practical skills, vocational training, and technological development to meet the needs of a developing country.
- iii. **Democratic and Inclusive Education:** The policy emphasizes inclusive education that caters to diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting a democratic spirit and respect for human rights.
- iv. **Curriculum Reforms:** The curriculum has been continuously reformed to address the challenges of national development, particularly in areas like science and technology, agriculture, and human resource development.

However, the extent to which these reforms have been implemented effectively has been limited by financial constraints and infrastructural issues.

Nigerian educational philosophy has continued to evolve, focusing on the need to address contemporary challenges such as globalization, technological advancements, and the need for sustainable development. Key contemporary trends include, emphasis on science and technology, inclusion and diversity; and African centered education. These developments and innovations are in response to the globalization and internationalization of education making it mandatory for education to respond to the issues of social responsibility, community centeredness and interconnectedness. The discussion below examines the relationship between artificial intelligence and philosophy of education.

Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy of Education: The Nexus

The philosophy of education plays a significant role in shaping the development and application of artificial intelligence (AI) by influencing how we approach learning, knowledge dissemination, and the ethical use of technology. The intersection of these two fields can be examined through various lenses, such as epistemology (the theory of knowledge), ethics, and the social implications of AI. Here are several key ways in which the philosophy of education impacts Artificial Intelligence:

1. Understanding Knowledge and Learning in Artificial Intelligence Systems

One of the primary concerns of both the philosophy of education and AI is how knowledge is acquired and processed. Educational philosophies, especially those related to constructivism (e.g., the works of Piaget and Vygotsky) emphasize active learning, problem-solving, and the construction of knowledge. These principles are mirrored in AI through machine learning algorithms that "learn" from data, adapting and improving over time through interactive processes. Philosophical questions about how humans acquire and structure knowledge inform the design of AI systems, particularly in areas like natural language processing, autonomous decision-making and educational AI tools. For instance, constructivist theories of education, which stress that learners build knowledge through experiences and interactions, align with AI techniques like reinforcement learning, where machines learn from environmental interactions. Philosophers of education can contribute to discussions on how AI can replicate or enhance these learning processes using philosophical insights and principles. (Boden, 2016).

2. Ethics and Moral Implications of Artificial Intelligence

The philosophy of education also directly impacts discussions on the ethical implication of the integration of artificial intelligence in education. Ethical frameworks, particularly those in educational philosophy, often address issues like fairness, justice, and the rights of individuals. Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates have at various times stressed the role of philosophy in education. Plato's ideas in the republic has stressed the role of education in forming the soul and promoting social justice in society, while Aristotle's emphasis on virtue and practical wisdom in Nicomachean Ethics can be applied to modern educational practices especially in terms of fostering character and ethical reasoning in students. The

Socratic method of inquiring and dialogue are being rediscovered as antidotes to the dehumanizing effects of excessive screen time and passive learning in modern classrooms.

These principles are increasingly relevant as AI systems are integrated into education, healthcare, and decision-making processes. Philosophers in the field of education have long advocated for equitable and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning. These ideas influence how AI technologies are developed to ensure they do not perpetuate biases or exacerbate inequalities. For example, AI systems used in educational settings need to be carefully designed to avoid discriminatory outcomes, such as reinforcing existing biases in assessments or disproportionately disadvantaging certain groups of students. The work of educational philosophers like John Dewey, who emphasized the importance of democratic and participatory education, resonates in discussions about how AI should be deployed to promote fairness and inclusivity in society.

3. Artificial Intelligence and Human-Centric Educational Models

Educational philosophy advocates for human-centered approaches that prioritize the learner's development, autonomy, and well-being. This perspective is critical in AI development because there is a growing concern about whether AI technologies could undermine human agency or replace human teachers. Philosophers of education argue for maintaining the role of human educators, even as AI systems become more involved in teaching and assessment. Binns (2019) in his experience-based education, in this system, students are taught to engage with their environment and community through presenting learning experiences that are socially engaging. The child-centered education that Dewey envisages affords children the opportunity to deal with real life situations and enables them to participate in learning activities in an independent and flexible manner.

Biesta (2015) reflects Dewey's educational ideas, especially his concepts of experience, inquiry sound progress and democratic education. Dewey is optimistic that experimented learning and community-based education can address contemporary challenges in education, including digital learning environments and social justice. Morton (2022) corroborates Hansen's views when he observed that Dewey's democratic ideals are crucial for resisting modern trends in education occasioned by digital technology and emphasis on artificial intelligence. For him, democratic education can foster a more inclusive and participatory educational system while Gill (2021) explores the intersection of Dewey's educational ideas and the increasing integration of technology in education. For him, Dewey's interactive, hands-on learning aligns with modern educational technologies, especially in fostering collaboration inclusive and participatory educational system.

Philosophical debates about the value of human interaction in learning influence how AI is integrated into classrooms. AI can support personalized learning, adaptive teaching strategies, and real-time feedback, but it is also essential that AI does not diminish the social and emotional aspects of education that human teachers provide. The development of AI that complements rather than replaces human educators reflects a philosophy of education that prioritizes collaboration and human engagement in the learning process.

4. Educational Access and Artificial Intelligence-Driven Learning

Another important aspect of the philosophy of education that influences AI is the notion of access to knowledge and learning. Educational philosophers like Paulo Freire have critiqued traditional educational systems that exclude marginalized voices and perpetuate inequalities. Freire's focus on "dialogical" and "problem-posing" education highlights the importance of active participation in learning processes. In the context of AI, this perspective raises important questions about how AI can

be used to democratize education. AI-powered platforms can potentially provide education to underserved populations, overcoming geographic, economic, and social barriers. However, the deployment of AI must be done thoughtfully, ensuring it is accessible and does not deepen existing divides in educational opportunity. For example, AI applications in education, such as personalized learning systems, can be an equalizer, but only if they are designed with universal access in mind.

5. The Future of Human-Artificial Intelligence Interaction in Education

Philosophers also address the future implications of AI in education, especially regarding the relationship between humans and machines. Some educational philosopher's express concerns about the potential for AI to dehumanize the learning experience, leading to an over-reliance on technology at the expense of critical thinking and creativity. Others, however, highlight the potential for AI to augment human intelligence and creativity, leading to new forms of educational practices. These philosophical debates inform the development of AI technologies in education that seek to balance technological advancement with human values. It is crucial that AI systems are designed not just to deliver content efficiently but to nurture curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in students. Other areas of influence include the following:

- i. Interactive learning environment can be provided by artificial intelligence through virtual or augmented realities. Philosophy of education can supplement these learning objectives. Following the constructivist learning theorists, learning becomes more effective when it is interactive as students engage with the learning materials; they collaborate with each other, construct their own ideas, and engage in problem-solving and discovery.
- ii. Language development. Philosophy of education is concerned with linguistic analysis in terms of contextual meanings and in providing clear and explicit usage of worlds in particular contexts. By so doing, it will help in promoting a culture of continuous language understanding, encouraging individuals to update their vocabulary and build communication skills.
- iii. Intelligent tutoring. Artificial intelligence tutoring involves identifying areas where a child may need assistance in his learning needs in order to provide remedial exercise and measures. Philosophy is concerned with clarifications, argumentations and critical thinking. As observed by Freire in Okere (2022) philosophy is a reasoned discourse and critical philosophy involves questioning and challenging the status quo with a view to addressing issues of inequality, injustice and poverty reduction. It involves dialogue, critical thinking, and the development of socially conscious citizens.
- iv. Behaviour analysis. Behaviour analysis involves assessing and evaluating the nature of interactions and behaviours which students bring to bear on their learning environment. Through this means, artificial intelligence can inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry, creativity, and problem-solving. The behavioural philosophers and psychologists, opine that a structured and controlled learning environment with a positive reinforcement can foster desirable behaviour and promote academic achievement.
- v. Personalized learning. Artificial intelligence can offer the needed educational opportunity of personalized learning. The task of philosophy of education is to throw its search light on the concept of personalized learning to determine the adequacy in meeting the philosophical standards of equity, equality and justice in educational provision. This is to ensure that education provides the opportunity for both individual and societal fulfillments.

Philosophy of Education Based Challenges to Artificial Intelligence

In spite of the laudable and achievable provision of Nigerian education, it has been criticized by well-meaning Nigerians. Ofoego (2016) noted that eminent philosophers such as Nduka (1982), Akinpelu

(2005) have in their separate writings argued that the philosophy of Nigerian education is based on foreign culture and world-views with little regard to Nigeria's notion about metaphysics, epistemology and axiology; and that it lacks coherence and logical valid base in some parts. They further stated that the philosophy ignored Kant's categorical imperative by emphasizing the tool syndrome of Nigerian education. Educational policy planning has failed to guarantee human freedom, justice and equity in the provision of educational opportunities; and the factor of corruption has contributed immensely to poor implementation to educational policies especially with regard to supervision of educational projects and provision of basic infrastructure in schools (Emeam, 2015). Furthermore, the problem of teacher training and support with regard to integrating new technologies has become of serious concern to 21st century education system.

Conclusion

Educational philosophy is critical to analyzing educational policies and practices. It must be concerned with a critique of the philosophical assumptions of the existing educational systems and practices from the standpoint of compatibility, consistency and adequacy in the light of the growing body of human knowledge; and to justify every idea or argument that may be adduced for its existence. This is to ensure that educational policies and practices do not deviate from providing sound knowledge and moral values for individual and societal development. It provides the yardstick for judging the effectiveness and efficiency of any education system worth its salt. Artificial intelligence has its potentials to enhance interactive learning outcomes, personalized learning, and the analysis of learner behaviours. While presenting these obvious benefits, they cannot substitute philosophical insights and principles that help to ensure that their integration in education does not harm student learning, sound knowledge, ethical imperative and human values that promote individual development and societal progress. A humanistic philosophy of education that incorporates artificial intelligence should be adopted to maintain a balance between machine efficiency and human capabilities that encourage human interaction, individual needs and interest, democratic values, empathy, mentorship, ethical guidance and differentiated learning styles. However, the integration of artificial intelligence in education is challenged by foreign philosophy of education that has preponderated the Nigerian education system coupled with defective educational policy planning, inadequate training of teachers to use the new technology, and corruption in the education system. Educational policy planning should resolve these challenges in order to ensure that education prepares students for practical life, solve real-world problems and foster democratic values for living in a globally competitive economy of 21st century age.

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