

Education in a Democratic Society: A Methodological Classic for Teachers and Students

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Abstract. It is obvious that education thrives in an environment of freedom, which is democracy. Unfortunately, teachers sometime seem to treat students as passive recipients of knowledge. This trend makes students dummy learners, instead of making them construct their knowledge in interaction with the environment by reorganizing their mental structures. In that idyll, this paper, Education in a Democratic Society: A Methodological Classic for Teachers and Students is an apologia on the thrills of education in a democratic society. It encourages appropriate teaching methodology in a teaching/learning process. Understanding that holistic education undergoes the processes of policy enactment/implementation, administration, teaching and learning, with a constructivist mien, this paper x-rays the educational roles of teachers and students in a democratic society. Using constructive learning methodology, this paper emphasizes knowledge construction instead of knowledge acquisition.

Keywords: Education, Democratic, Teachers, Students, Society

1. Introduction

The key to understanding every discipline of learning be it simple or complex begins with grasping or apprehending the concept. Once that is achieved, every other thing becomes easier. Let's begin this discussion by appreciating the idea and defining the concept, education. From an etymological point of view, the word education originated from the three Latin words, educere, educare and educatum (E+duco).

Dhaker Rahul (2016) & Bhatt Dilip (2017) give the following useful explanations: Educere: means to draw out, to lead forth. This talks about the ability of

the teacher to provoke the innate ability of the individual and stretch the scope of his development. Every student has great potentials that must be spotted and developed through education.

Educare: to bring up, to nourish, mold. This presents the job of a teacher like that of a gardener. His duty is to nourish the educational life of the child like young plant in the garden or seedlings on a seedbed. His potentials are to be developed with adequate care and nourishment.

Educatum: (from two stems: 'E' - implying driving from inward to outward and 'Duco', meaning progressing or developing). This gives a great responsibility to the teacher to stare the inborn potentials of the student to be full-blown. To some scholars, the Latin educatum refers to the act of training or teaching (Dhaker Rahul, 2016). According to Bhatt Dilip (2017), educatum refers to something extrinsic, in form of instructions, experience and activities that mold the student's ability. Autodidactic learning also falls into this dimension of education.

Recapping the whole idyll, Bhatt (2017) has this to say:

From the above derivative meaning, it is revealed that education is needed for a progressive society and targeted to bring overall prosperity to the individual by unfolding his potentials

A quarrel ensued between two women because one castigated the other, "uneducated bush woman". After the tiff, the offended woman was asked why she called her friend, "uneducated bush woman". That is the best derogation for one who has not being to school. Unfortunately, this is the view folks have about the concept of education. To a layperson, education is the acquisition of skills in reading and writing from a school. He or she doesn't understand that that is one of the major ways of acquiring

education. This happens because he or she does not adequately grasp the meaning of education.

From a traditional view point, other avenues of education include the home, church or mosque (religious places), the community and mass media. School (classroom) is just one of the agencies that offer formal education. Classroom education is a formal means of education because it engages scientific methodology, techniques, principles, material and trained personnel. But that doesn't nullify the fact that education also takes place in an informal manner. In the verbiage of Njoku (2007), "the first form of education takes place chiefly in an informal way in the home and in the society among family members, peers, parents..." (p.2). In that idyll, a child starts learning outside the school.

In view of the foregoing, Udo-Ema (1978) opines that one is literate and partly educated when he can read and write. He made his point clear by explaining that literacy is only a part of education. In his view, a house wife who has not gone through the four walls of a classroom, but is a good home keeper, who takes proper care of her husband, children and cook good meals is an educated illiterate woman. On this note, it is crystal clear that education is a process of change and development of the mind that affects man in his tripartite nature (spirit, soul and body). Thus, as a discipline of study, the following definitions are offered:

- The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction especially at a school or university.
- The theory and practice of teaching.
- A body of knowledge acquired while being educated.
- Information about or training in a particular field or subject.
- An enlightening experience (lexico.com, 2020).

2. Aims/Objectives of Education

In defining education (Pai Obanya: 2019) said that "the aim refers to the reason for educating people and making education work". The ideal aim of education is the development of man in his entirety (spirit, soul and body), in relation with the society vis-à-vis his environment. In another vein Iwuoha (2008), posits that "education is for the development of human abilities, capabilities, attitude and other forms of values" (p.11). In the light of the above definition of education by Iwuoha, the purpose of education could be rightfully divided into two purposes: Personal and National. The overriding purpose of education for an

individual is to make him useful to him and the society.

2.1 National Purpose for Education

Iwuoha (2008) maintained that education is the industrial agency of nation building and went further to highlight five purposes of education which include:

- To build a free and democratic society
- To build a just and egalitarian society
- To build a united front and a self-reliance nation
- To build a great and dynamic economy
- To build a country with full opportunities for all citizens

2.2 Teaching

In the verbiage of the Grand Sage of Education in Africa, Obonya (1980):

"Teaching has to do with enlightening, elaborating, encouraging, enthusing, explaining, edifying, educating, inspiring, instructing, imparting, indoctrinating, transforming, training, inculcating and transmitting ideas, information, virtue, values, skills and knowledge..." (p.1).

What this means is that teaching is a human phenomenon that seeks to bring out the potentials the creator deposited in His creation especially man (human beings), which is usually aimed at making society a good place to live for the benefit of all. This work has to be done by the teacher who may be formal or informal.

2.3 Qualifications of an Effective Teacher

It must be clearly understood first and foremost that teaching involves more than mere dissemination of information, values or ideas. Allusive of the fact that teaching is like raising a garden, it calls for preparation, proper sowing, tendering and growth. In view of that, Opinmi (2007) lists the following qualities: Personal Interest, Love for children (students/learners), Discipline, Knowledge, Personal Motivation, Innovation/Creativity, Leadership Quality, Commitment, Diligence, and Honesty/Trustworthiness.

2.3.1 Personal Interest

Effective teaching begins with personal interest of the teacher in the profession. This interest must be developed and kept aflame. It is quite unfortunate that teaching profession is bedeviled and lily-livered

by the artifice of considering it a means of solace and livelihood while waiting for a better job. Personal interest is the ember that makes teaching efficient and result-oriented.

2.3.2 Love for Children (Students/Learners)

An effective teacher must love his students. This love is interpreted by his interest in their success. True love makes the teacher come down to the level of his students and interact with them. Any person who calls himself a teacher, who detests his students, end up being annoyed quarrelsome in the classroom. Such a person is an instructor, not an educator.

2.3.3 Discipline

Discipline is an essential virtue in teaching, especially in the classroom. A disciplined teacher maintains self-discipline and over-priced quality that underpin excellent educational delivery at all time.

2.3.4 Knowledge

It is quite essential for a teacher to be knowledgeable in two dimensions, in order to be effective. He must first and foremost possess general sound knowledge that will make him grounded in the professional know-how, about the subject he is called upon to handle in the classroom. In that wise, it is also paramount for a teacher to have a deep knowledge of the learner. This cannot be achieved except he interacts with the students, attend to their curiosity and endless questions.

2.3.5 Personal or Self-Motivation

By personal motivation, we are referring to motivation that does not dependent on external factors. It is expedient to note that a teacher does not operate in a vacuum. He is prone to emotional, psychological, environmental, economic, sociological factors that are liable to reduce his zest. Therefore, personal motivation is key to effective teaching and must be developed by the teacher.

The imperative of personal motivation and its effect on teaching-learning process in all areas of human endeavor made Ackerman (2019) to consider it as the superlative form of motivation. In buttressing the impact of personal motivation, two situations are here considered:

- This has to do with a teacher who is neither passionate nor excited about his job, but he knows it is necessary for him to do it. Now

this sense of obligation makes him do his best to completing the task.

- The other is a situation where the teacher is passionate and excited, even to the point of volunteering his expertise and happily puts in his best to completing the task.

In which of these scenarios do you think a teacher will be most effective, with a sense of fulfillment? Of course, it is situation number 2. What do you think is the difference between these teachers? We can answer this question in just two words – obligation and interest.

The difference is very clear. The teacher in scenario one above is self-motivated. But that of scenario two is motivated based on extrinsic factors, hence Ackerman (2019) says: “It likely won’t come as a surprise that doing something for its own sake and your own purposes is likely to be more fulfilling, enjoyable and successful than doing something to meet external standards or to please others”.

Though, personal motivation could also be driven by extrinsic factors, it is generally driven by intrinsic factors. Hence, Daniel Goleman portrays four components of personal motivation: Improvement/achievement drive, commitment (to goal) drive, initiative (‘readiness to act on opportunities’) drive and optimism/resilience drive (Oral Career Editorial Team, 2016).

The question now is, how could we develop the skill set for personal motivation? Ackerman (2019) proffers the solutions:

Skill set for Cultivating Self-motivation

- Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) goal.
- Taking right risk
- Getting feedback to figure out areas where improvement necessary
- Commitment to personal/organization goals with a drive to go extra mile achieving them.
- Consciously searching out opportunities and taking hold of them when they arrive.
- Being resilient.

Skill set for maintaining Self-Motivation:

- Developing love for continuous learning
- Spend good time with supportive, enthusiastic and motivated people
- Develop a positive mindset, enhance your optimism and resilience

- Spot out your strength and weaknesses and thrive
- Proper time management and avoidance of procrastination
- Get help and render help when/where necessary.

Teacher's Role in Student's Motivation:

- Create for students an environment of freedom, self-rule and right to good choice making. For instance, seating pattern (arrangement), final project options and implementation of problem-solving learning, are ways through which teachers could motivate students.
- Give reasonable feedback and encourage hard work.
- Create a healthy relationship, driven by genuine interest with your students with end goal of learning in focus.
- Inspire your students to think, discuss and write about how the course is relevant to their personal lives.

Student's Role in Self-motivation

- Ascribe importance to your studies, taking responsibility for acquiring knowledge and learning.
- Set your goal and make plans towards achieving it with a roadmap of what to do each semester, month, week and day. Such routine is critical to personal motivation.
- Spot out comfortable learning environments
- Sleep enough eat good food and exercise regularly to remain healthy.
- Tame time monsters like the internet, video games or unproductive time spent with friend.

2.3.6 Creativity

Teaching as a profession is better enriched by creativity and resourcefulness. Creativity brings about competence in the classroom. And competence is the ability to manage every circumstance that may arise in the class.

The story of Timothy Nna, a children education expert is a good lesson for teachers and intending teachers:

On arrival to take over his job at AG 43 Gokana, Street, Bori, the whole children were crying for the outgoing children educator. The weeping became so

serious that he could not address them. All they were crying for was the retention of the outgoing man. Timothy didn't know what to do. But out of creativity, he started crying with them. He cried for the abrupt transfer of his predecessor, in regression of the pains the children got as a result. His weeping so caught the attention of the children that they stopped crying and was watching him. In order to help the situation, they approached him, pleading he should stop crying. "No, let's not stop crying, this is a very bad situation", he said. "Sir, we will not cry again, you stop crying too", the children demanded.

What do you make of the above scenario? Timothy was at the verge of losing his job, but for his creativity that made the children feel his empathy. They saw him not as one who has come to replace their educator, who was more like a father rather, as one who has come to identify with their predicament, even to the point of crying when they cry. With this, he gained entrance into the heart of the children. At last, he became a role model to them. Thus, creativity is important to professional teaching.

2.3.7 Leadership Traits

The leadership approach of a teacher is portraiture of his effectiveness in class. A good teacher is bound to be a good leader. The congruence between good leadership effective teachings is inseparable. Good leadership makes the teacher give listening ears to the opinions of the students.

2.3.8 Commitment

Determination, dedication and devotion are importance factors in effective teaching. Opinmi (2007) calls it the 3D's that are essential to commitment and effective teaching. The above 3Ds makes the job of a teacher valuable in the classroom. These 3D's make him resourceful to the students' and the organization.

2.3.9 Diligence

By diligence, we mean persistence and carefulness that make teacher do the needful. Diligence in teaching calls for total commitment to the educational ideals of teaching/learning.

2.3.10 Honesty/Trustworthiness

Opinmi (2007) says that "the straightest, surest path to respect and confidence and success is through honesty and truthfulness, and the straightest, shortest path to failure and disrepute is through falsehood".

Honesty and trustworthiness attract students' respect, resulting in love, cooperation and compliance in the classroom.

Although the above qualities and characteristics of an effective teacher is not exhaustive, they are imperative effective teaching/learning in all ramification.

3. Methodology of Teaching

There are a pantheon of methods and techniques, adopted in the past which are at the disposal of the teachers to enrich his lesson. However, Opinmi (2007, 5) avers that any method of instruction considered appropriate by the teacher should go in line with an ancient Chinese proverb, which says:

What I hear, I forget

What I see, I remember

What I do, I understand

In other words, whatever method of instruction deemed necessary by the teacher, emphasis should be made in a way the lesson would be practicalized rather than theorized. Any teaching method that engages the students to practicalize the lesson helps them see, think, do, say and hear. It is obvious that the path to successful teaching is not a one-way traffic. However, it is expedient teachers choose the right instructional method(s) otherwise, the best curriculum and the most excellent syllabus becomes more or less academic death sentences are so many teaching methods.

However, for the sake of time and space, we shall in line with Opinmi (2007) group them into ten:

Presentation Method: This has to do with delivering educational instruction and information through oral communication. This method happens through several forms, e.g. Prepared Speech, Lecture Method, Story Telling Method, and Use of Resource Person.

Discussion Method: This is an interactive procedure of learning. This teaching method enhances team work and gives privilege to student to share their experience and ideas. This can be done through brainstorming, debates, symposium, devil's advocate, etc.

Inquiry Method: In debate method of teaching, students are given topics to propose or oppose. In other words, they are asked to debate for or against a topic of interest. The aim of this is to make student bold, without intimidation, advancing his point in public.

Grouping Method: This method has to do with dividing the class into groups, with a leader to

coordinate each group deliver the assignment within a certain time frame.

Expository Method: The teacher demonstrates his expertise by dissecting the concept to the understanding of the students.

Inductive Method: This method is good for mathematics class. It uses a particular situation or circumstance as a base to formulate general rules or formulae.

Deductive Method: This method is antonymous to inductive method. It involves using already-made formula to solve problem.

Laboratory Method: The teacher creates laboratory or study room with relevant instructional materials for varying disciplines like Fine Art, Mathematics, and Home Economics etc for students. The availability of these materials stares and prepares them for independent research and learning.

Socratic or Questioning Method: At this level, the teacher prepares relevant questions that will boost the understanding of students in the lesson. Distributing these questions to students for answer is the best way to tackle the problem of sleeping in class.

Activity Method: This has to do with teaching/learning activities, sub-divided into 7 more methods. They are: Dramatization Method, Rhymes and Poems, Construction Method, Role-Playing Method, Music and Song Method, Games and Corners

4. Education and Democracy

The fact that intimate relationship exists between education and democracy is very obvious. In a democratic society, education is given priority. This is true because in the absence of education, democracy suffers stillbirth. Democratic values such as fellow-felineness, dignity of individual, equality, fraternity justice, liberty, cooperation, unity and peace, etc are given credence in education, in order to be more effective and useful. For democracy to be understood as a way of life, it must be fused into the educational system from the very beginning and practiced in institutions of learning.

In the verbiage of Bawa Bhawna (2019), democracy, "is an order in which every individual gets limitless opportunities to blossom according to his/her potentialities and in which power and responsibilities are shared on a mutual basis without any confrontation and conflict" (p.11).

4.1 Studying outside Box

Giving that the stamina of democracy depends deeply upon the intelligence and character of the people and

that democracy gives every individual egalitarian opportunities, it is imperative students understand how to study without being boxed by a particular discipline and/or University. It is disheartening that students study to pass examinations without "...learning for graduation and profession" (Odon Akanimo 2019, 74).

How does studying outside the box work? It must be understood ab initio that "studying outside the box" is allusive of the fact that educational prowess is a function of creativity, and for creativity to thrive, captivity must perish. The box in this case is the sway of the society to hold you bound to follow the crowd. Teachers and students must make conscious effort to get out the mess of conventional academic life, in such a way that will make them resourceful in the labor market. How do we achieve that? It is simple. Turn your course content into a career context.

4.2 Turning Course Content into Career Context

We are not ignorant of the fact that University system around Africa is set up in a way that students are restricted, so to say, from courses outside their disciplines, through which they could navigate to desired career destination. However, there is no legal or legislative provision that authenticates the status quo, which bar students from being creative and get out of the box. Therefore, if you want to be an outstanding graduate, who will sell in the labor market, it is imperative you study outside the cocoon of your actual course of study. That is how education is practiced in the UK. You can also take some online courses outside your area of study, that will be strategic to your career dream. It makes university graduates, universal professionals (career experts) (Odon Akanimo 2019, 74-82).

5. Conclusion

This work 'education in a democratic society: A methodological classic for teachers and students' tried to x-ray the involvement of teaching and learning in a free (democratic) society such as ours. Education is the panacea for development generally (mental and otherwise) of any given society. Educate the mind, and there will be fewer problems in the society.

It therefore becomes imperative that teachers understand that their duty is to spot, draw out and nourish. They are called to mold and train students to be useful to themselves and the nation at large. Such assignment could only be delivered in an atmosphere where democratic values (like fellow-felineness,

unity, dignity of individual, etc) are esteemed. Since education is a teaching/learning process, the role of the student is to construct the knowledge acquired in order to address environmental realities. The quality of the students produced speaks volumes about the quality and caliber of the teachers.

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