

ASSESSMENT ON THE ETHICAL IMPLICATION OF DESPOTIC ACTION ON STUDENT-TEACHERS RELATIONS

Oni, Adetunji Sunday, PhD
Department of Philosophy
Osun State University,
Ikire Campus.

E-mail: tunjioni2@yahoo.com; Phone: 07061935191, 08056602630

Abstract

It is glaring that Searching for and acquiring an indubitable knowledge is the main concerns of every individual in life, invariably the main concern of the learners. However, reflecting on cordial relationship which is expected to exist between the teacher and student towards acquiring knowledge cannot be underestimated in the field of academy. In learner's view, teacher is known to be an organizer and moderator of child's teaching who coaches or impacts knowledge on students by virtue of his qualification, skills and experience. Notwithstanding, Robinson Crusoe once asserts that man is not an island of knowledge, nor has an absolute means to knowledge, meaning that knowledge is collective activities of two or more contributors. Through critical and semantic evaluation, the paper identified despotic attitude as one of the main factors responsible for moral self-indulgence and educational problem alongside poor relationship between the teachers and the students in this contemporary period. It is on this note that this paper apt at critically reflect on the despotic attitude of the teacher towards student learning process and its implication towards teacher-student relations. This paper therefore harps that despotic attitude has constituted a threat to ethics of man relationship. The strength of the paper more so lies in its effort to establish the fact that the extent to which pragmatic education will inculcate morality in teacher-student's relations will contribute to meaningful human development.

Keywords: Despotism, Ethics, Student- teacher, pragmatism, Education

Introduction

This paper examines the ethical implication of teacher's despotic attitude on students-teacher's relations with the view of justifying the cordial relationship that is expected to exist between the teacher and the students in the process of transferring and acquiring an indubitable knowledge alongside implementation of ethical standard within the society. There is no doubt saying that effectiveness of knowledge depends on commitment of teacher to discharge their official duties as an organizer and moderator of child's learning, the ultimate realization of aim of education is therefore a failure without teacher because nobody will pass the necessary information to the students, more so the new development on policies shall not be circulated. The teacher has a better role on the society and the nation at large. They are problem-solving agents, inculcator of ethical standard; because of the level of their training, but in a situation where teacher fails to perform the expected

task, this will collapse or affect the educational system of the nation and the student mode of learning. If philosophy among other definitions is a critical reflection on the totality of man, his activities and experiences in the universe, it is not out of place therefore to have a philosophical cum ethical reflection on student-teachers relations for in so doing; master-servant relations will be abased and society will become better off vis-à-vis human comfort, happiness and dignity. However, for more clarification, the paper is divided into various segments, while the first session examines the concept of ethics being the basis for the determinant of human conduct, the roles of teacher in educational system is also considered. The paper examines the nature of despotic attitude and finally assesses the ethical implication of teacher despotic attitude on student-teachers relation.

It is a truism that man share quite a number of characteristics with other living things. Nevertheless, the fact still stands clear that he is very unique. Man has been endowed with certain qualities which other beings cannot boast of and the crest of this is his rationality; the ability to reason. Man is capable of deciding consciously which stimuli he ought to respond to and which to disregard. Rationality of man has automatically made him responsible for whatever behaviour he addresses himself to. Man does not act out of blank mind but decides on an action after conscious evaluation of the prospect of such action. There seem to be a concession on the fact that behind every action performed by man is a motivating principle. Several schools of thought in philosophy and other branches of studies are hence filled with curiosity to know what motivates man, what is that goal towards which man directs his behaviour? These and many more are core issues in the field of ethics.

Ethics as one of the main branches of philosophy has known is a normative science of human conduct. Its aim is not to describe the way men behave but the way men ought to behave, ethics is concerned with moral standards. It is also referred to as a branch of philosophy that describes as the science of conducts, a philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems and moral judgments. It can also be described as an intellectual enterprise, a rational enquiry into its subject matter in the hope of gaining knowledge. Ethics is concerned with conduct, a kind of behaviour where one makes a voluntary choice between alternative courses of action because it has decided that man ought to choose one of the alternatives rather than the other.

Aristotle in his work on the need to make choice emphasizes that ultimate end for man must be one which include;

- i. Self- sufficient, that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing,
- ii. Final, that which is always desirable in itself and never for the something else, and
- iii. Attainable by man (Albert 1958:38)

Thus, Ethics is a normative science which concerns itself with norms or standard, it is a field of study in philosophy that investigates the moral justification of every human action. The synopsis of this is that ethics crates moral virtue for human being, Virtue is the excellence of a thing. Aristotle argues that a virtuous man lives according to reason. Here

he further subdivided human virtue into two groups; the moral and the intellectual. The former is concerned with the habitual choice of actions in accordance with rational principles while the latter is concerned on the contemplation of theoretical truths and the discovery of the rational principles which ought to control everyday actions. The study of ethics is far from being a matter of mere academic interest. It is impossible for a person with an inquiring mind to live a guileful and satisfying life without ever delving into ethics, thus, Socratic aphorism asserts that unexamined life is not worth living. The challenging to examining one's life falls with special force on those who are making the transition; youth to adulthood, learner to trained, student to teacher. Almost all of us through our childhood and youth have accepted with little or no question the moral precepts and practice we learned in home, schools and churches and have tried to live according to them. But the time comes when the normal, intelligent young person finds himself in a quandary and beginning to question the moral, "truth" he has always accepted. It may be that he is confronted with a novel situation to which the precepts he has learnt either do not apply or demand a curve of action that seem to him somehow wrong or it may be simply that in growing up and going out into the world, particularly if that means going to school, he suddenly discovers that his moral world is turned topsy-turvy, one who finds himself in this situation is ripped for the study of ethics, then the great question becomes why should I believe or acts the precepts he has been taught? Why should I act in the ways that has been prescribed?

Morality and Ethics

Several philosophers have discussed the relationship between morality and ethics, among which include; Thomas Aquinas, Emmanuel Kant, John Mill among others. Notwithstanding, Omoregbe (1993:3) asserts that ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the morality of human action, he moves further by describing it as the systematic study of the fundamental principle of human conduct. Morality, as described by Hare (1982) is a rational activity. As a rational activity, it means that what I as an agent ought to do or performs is based on my faculty of reason. That means, morality presuppose that man has a reason or in the words of Hegel, man is a rational animal. The synopsis of this is that whatever action taken by man, it is solely responsible for it. However, morality can be divided into two aspects and these are;

Customary morality
Regulative morality

While customary morality is the use of rule or law as a yardstick to measuring the standard of human behavior which Bull (1973:89) described as absolute, eternal and unchanging, they are given by God and laid down in the scripture. On the other hand, regulative or reflective morality emphasis the use of human reason and sees man as being autonomous. This is what prompts Kant to ask the question; what was it for a human being to be morally free? To be morally free means that we are responsible for our actions and we regard ourselves as the author of what we do, which brings in the notion of rewards and punishment.

Morality is different from ethics; however, the relationship between ethics and morality is similar to that between logic and thinking and between theology and religion. Momoh (1991) buttress this view in his assertion that ethics represents a theoretical dimension to morality while morality will say that human being ought to have a good life, ethics will ask or examines what goodness is or what a good life is. Thus, morality presupposes ethics; problem of morality gives rise to ethics, hence such question as the ethical implication of teacher's despotism falls in the category of ethics and morality. Morality is regarded primarily as controlling and even respecting natural human tendencies, while in Aristotle and the utilitarian, morality is seen as developing and fulfilling natural human tendencies.

In a nutshell, morality is the basis for any ethical issue. Thus, it is against this background that ethical theories stem from the efforts of ethical beings to deals with concrete problems of life as they are centered on and concerned with how the “good life” ought to be lived. Stroll and Richard (1981:11) succinctly corroborates this view when he observes that the objects of study of ethics are theories bothering on human nature

Students-Teachers Relations in Educational System

Education has been variously defined by many scholars; however, the central focus is described as a process of socialization, acculturation, and transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it, and be the children or adult (Agwaranze 1998:252). It is also the process of developing knowledge ability in individual in order to enhance self and societal improvement. The above conception on education indicates that it is not a field of study that operate in a vacuum, rather education takes into consideration the two main body: the teacher who will impact knowledge, more so the students or learner, whose knowledge is being imparted. These two body play prominent role in education and their role complement each other, without one the other has no relevance.

In a general term, teacher can be described as a person that coaches or impact knowledge on students otherwise refers to as learner. Teacher varies from home to school to religious association and the communities at large. To reduce the definition of a teacher to their formal education, we can say a teacher is a man of learning and skilled in teaching who is qualified by virtue of education and training to help his people to gain entry into a common wealth of knowledge and skills. A teacher is that person who passes interactive behaviour and activities with students in order to effect changes e.g information, skill acquisition, developing of positive attitudes in present and future attitude. Considering the above teacher's qualifications or attribute, one can now see the importance of teachers in pupil's life. In all ramifications, student's achievements in life depend on teacher's effort. Also, teachers are the prime mover of educational system, the shaper of the future country. Teacher could neither be a curse nor bless to educational system and the students, community or society as a whole. Effective of knowledge depends on commitment of teachers to discharge their official duties, the ultimate realization of aim of education is a failure without teachers because nobody will pass the needful information to the students and also the new development on policies shall not be circulated. The teachers have a

better role on the society and the nation at large. They are the problem solving agent because of the level of their training. Where the teacher fails to discharge his/ her duties as expected, this will collapse or affect the educational system of the nation.

Analysis of teacher's despotism

In its broadest sense, teaching is a process that facilitates learning. It is the specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes designed to provide unique services to meet the educational needs of the individual and of society. The choice of learning activities whereby the goals of education are realized in school is the responsibility of the teaching profession. Teaching also emphasizes the development of values and guides students in their social relationships. It is teachers employ practices that develop positive self-concept in students. The direct interaction between teacher and students is the single most important element in teaching.

Teaching is furthermore described as the conscious and deliberate efforts by a nature or experienced person to impart information, knowledge, and skills and so on to an immature or less experienced person, with the intention that the latter will learn or come to believe what he is taught on good grounds. This implies that the process of inducing the learning must be such as is morally acceptable and must be pedagogically sound. The main purpose of teaching is to bring about a positive change in the behaviour or outlook of each other, which the learner is the most beneficiary. More so, it must be noted that no teacher comes out of a teaching situation unaffected or uninfluenced. Either feeling delighted at the way he has taught or feeling bad. In either case, feeling affects teacher's future behaviour which it either reinforces if the feeling is good or changes if it is adverse.

However, Despotism can be described as a system of government in which the ruler has the ultimate power over their subjects. To some extent, despotism has been conflated with tyranny in most western languages, in the sense that it is a form of government where the total domination of subject is by a single person. Aristotle (1955) in his political assertion stated that tyrannical and despotic rule both resembled and differed from each other but he asserts that in both rulers treat subject as their slaves and use a number of repressive means designed to forestall or crush resistance by those dominated. In relating this to student- teachers' relations, it can be described as a teaching problem founds in the style of teaching by the teacher while performing his duty. Among the duty of the teacher is to deliver his lecture, while the students listening attentively, apart from this, the students is also allow to asking questions, makes some argument with the teachers in order to understand the topic, but in a despotic teacher, the case is different. A despotic teacher is the alpha and omega of the class, students' contribution and suggestion is not welcome. A despotic teacher believes he should “talk down” to the students rather than “with them” and the students have fear to question his topic, this attitude force the students to comply with the teacher. In teacher's despotic acts, the teacher thinks alone and the students are to agree anytime, anywhere with him.

More so, the despotic teacher is to impact his own finished product of knowledge to the

students while the students is not allow to give their own contributions on issue under discussion by the teacher. Thus, it is a system of teaching where teacher always exercise a great authority and no other person can give any other options to what he has said. John Dewy who is known to be one of the proponents of pragmatic principle maintain that the teacher is not an authoritarian and fearful figure, but also not the dispensable element in the Rousseau's type of child-centered education. Rather, the teacher is essentially an organizer and a moderator of the child's learning. A teacher must be someone who is thoroughly familiar with the psychological development of the student.

One of the essential characters of a successful teacher is the flexible character. The teacher is expected to be dynamic and provide enough scope for addition, suggestion and modifications. The rules and regulations should act as a means to an end and not end in them. Rigid uniformity and mechanical efficiency are the very antithesis of good teacher. Flexibility does not mean that the teacher should be weak without any norms or standards creating chaos at every step. What is meant is a proper balance between rigidity and elasticity.

Philosophers' View on Student- Teachers Relations

Each philosophy determines the place of the teacher differently in the teaching –learning process. For instance, the naturalist stress that nature is the best teacher, the teacher is the observer of students. Teacher should never interfere with the free activities of the students. Here the school of thought gives secondary importance to the teachers. The idealist advocates that teacher is the pivotal point in the process of education. According to the pragmatists, the teacher is a friend, a guide; he should not impose anything on the pupil. He should provide opportunity to the students to undertake experiments and researches. Pragmatism describes man as a living organism, a growing organism that has desires, wants, interest, needs and so on, and fixes its own goals and objectives (Akinpelu 1981). Man struggles through the use of its intelligence to obtain his desires. Man is also a social being whose interest are best promoted when living in harmony with other social human beings. Because man lives and interacts with other living and non-living things in his surrounding, he inevitably acquires some experience as he tries to master and solve the problem that the environment raises for him in the process of living. Thus, at the heart of theory of knowledge is the belief that knowledge is nothing but human experienced processed and refined.

Despotism and the moral implication

Among the ethical implication of despotic attitude of the teacher is the violation of interest theory of n individual. By interest theory it means the characteristic attitude of the mind towards any object, which attracts and absorbs its attention. Hence to have an interest in something is to have a stake in how that thing goes. Interest could also be described as feeling that one has when you want to know or learn more about something or somebody. Interest is the subjective aspect of a person. When teacher impose his teaching in an authoritative way, interest theory is been violated. This implies that despotism encourage narrative education, this has led the students to memorize, and if one invariably misses any

content, the student fails the exam. Since the effectiveness of educational system of a country depend solely on teacher's attitudes, and by virtue of despotic attitude of teacher, educational system has not been reasonable, very obsolete impose which has in turn affect nation development in all area of life.

Despotism does not respect the fundamental right of learners, as a result it discourage self- learning and disrespect students intellectual integrity, they are capable of destroying students activities because some student will reach the conclusion that is even better to copy his not rather than making a new idea to what he or she taught. It affects the student and also set back the progress of education in the nation which contributes to national development. Meanwhile, existentialism believes that education is not just to adjust the learner or to integrate him at all cost to the society, but the task of education is to enhance his ability to decides correctly to help man develop his initiative, to search for and discover himself and to cultivate self-reliance.

Pragmatic Theory as Pivotal to Teachers-Students relations

Pragmatism is derived from the word practice or practical, it is a philosophical school that sees reality as a state of constant change; the school of thought believes in the use of scientific method as isolation to man's problem, you can only get meaning to an idea through the practical experience. Pragmatic theory was developed as a revolt against sterile and useless metaphysic, which dominated the philosophical stages of the time. As a school of thought, that embraces the practical knowledge, it stresses man to use intelligent to overcome problems.

In relating the school of thought to teacher-students education, it believes that education should be dynamic and change from time to time in relevance to societal wishes and demands. It's against any form of stagnancy which will either not work or lead to progress. The school according to the pragmatism cannot directly change the public but it can reform it by equipping the children with social intelligence and by holding up the ideas of the life in that society. Thus, pragmatism holds that the method to be employed in teaching should be group learning, which values the freedom of learners, because the teacher is neither a spectator nor a dictator. Based on this school of education, there are some salient points that can be deduced as a way of curbing teacher despotism in student-teacher's relations, among which includes:

- a. Teaching is not an act of imposition of person on others but rather an interaction between the teacher and the learners. A pragmatic teacher must not only to explains his action or give reason for statement but also acquit himself well in the classroom by a good mastery of his pupils and many other things
- b. Pragmatic can stand as a solution to despotism because it does not allow stagnancy and it will implore the teachers to improve their way of taught and allow the students to share their own ideas and look for the best rather than imposition.
- c. It also allows the teacher to teach in a moral way and in the course of his dialogue with the students, therefore, the student will be able to teach others, the pragmatic

system ensure that argument based on authority must be on the side of freedom not against it,

- d. Pragmatics believes in the inclusion of science while this will enable research and constant unveiling of reality. It will also develop the student's mind towards the technological improvement, and everything shall be practical thus expose the truth to the students, not ordinary assumption as it was taught by the despotic teacher who cannot investigate or experiment issues before passing it down to the students
- e. Pragmatism endorses group learning as against individual method by despotic. The group learning helps the students to tackle or get solution to different problems while the individual learning resulted in isolation. When students read together, they share knowledge within themselves and learn faster even than the classroom level and this will also reduce the burden of the teacher in the classroom.

f. Hence, we can deduce that pragmatism encourage the teacher to develop their mind and update their lesson note, more so, avoids the dictation and presentation of outdated notes to their students because of the advancement that pragmatism will add to their knowledge. Since no educational system can rise above the quality and performance of its teaching if the teacher is now improved, effective and not stagnant all these attributes will also improve the standard of the students. In a nutshell, it has been established that despotic teacher attitude is one of the causes of educational problem and this has been transferred from one generation to other. There is no doubt saying that it has affected both the political, economic, social and moral stability of the students. Since schools have to produce good product from their students as a result of despotic ways of some teachers. Nigeria government more so, has many roles to play in other to check balance these types of teachers. However, pragmatic theory can successfully serve as a solution to the problem of the despotic teachers in order to eradicate academic conservatism, curriculum stagnancy and erroneous student perception.

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 recognizes the rights to freedom of expression and the press. As provided in section thirty-nine (39) sub section one (1); every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinion and to receive and import ideas and information without interference (Constitution 1999:22). This emphasizes that knowledge involves the delivery and exchange of ideas and information. If this is followed, it is deducible that both the students and the teachers have rights to education and that these rights should not be interfered with. The inadequacies in student-teachers relations shows that some students have open access to their teachers while majority have restricted access based on the panic that has been existing in students mind whenever there is need to confront the teacher. The consequence of which tells on the academic performance of the students

Conclusion

Conclusively, it must be noted that successful teachers are those that has the ability to maximize the learning potential of all students in their class. Developing positive relationship between teacher and students is a fundamental aspect of quality teaching and students learning. Teacher -students relationship promote a sense of school belonging and encourage students to participate cooperatively, students develop confidence to experiment and succeed in an environment where they are not restricted by the fear or failure. Teachers should not be despotic; they should rather be more tolerance, friendly and sensitive to the needs of the students thereby making the learning environment conducive for proper learning. Through this there will be room for cordial relationship between them. Above all for mutual educational development, the rights and freedom of the students should also be respected. In order to enable the students to manifest their potentialities and capabilities, they should be allowed to reasonably exercise their freedom and make choice (Nnoruka 1998:241). These are some of the ways by which the students can develop themselves and contributes meaningfully towards the development and progress of knowledge.

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