RESEARCH ARTICLE

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERSTANDING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THEIR FIELD OF RESEARCH

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

People talk of philosophy without understanding its relevance to their field of research. A general account of the term "philosophy" and its object may enable anyone to better understand its relevance to education and almost all the other academic disciplines. This study used logical thinking coupled with cases from a literature review to elicit the meaning of the concept of philosophy and its object within the context of education as illustrated in the book "Philosophy and Education in Africa: An Introductory Text for Students of Education" (Njoroge and Bennaars 1986)**.** The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek word philia (meaning love) and sophia (meaning wisdom). It is basically the love or quest of wisdom in all aspects. The formal object of philosophy is all aspects of reality while the formal objects of other disciplines such as physics, biology or sociology is confined to or limited to an aspect of reality. For instance the term biology is derived from the Greek word bio meaning life hence biology is limited to the study of living things. The same thing can be said of psychology which is derived from the Greek word Psyche which means mind and logos which means science, theory or study hence psychology becomes the descriptive study of mind behaviour or mental phenomena. This is not the case with philosophy for philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatever since philosophical inquiry is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics. A philosopher therefore considers everything as important and want to know "why" things happen the way they happen. Hence, philosophy is concerned with both the 'why' and the 'how' questions. Just as small percentage of people have an insight into the fundamental problems of human existence with which philosophers are concerned. Majority of people subscribe to traditions and customs. Having said that there is no area in domain in which philosophy cannot ask questions, there is therefore need for philosophical thinking about education and not just the scientific thinking if education is to be meaningful and useful to the one being educated because he who has studied philosophy is more likely to view things with a wide in depth analysis of evidence as opposed to he who has not. This is so because the mere accumulation of knowledge does not lead to understanding because it does not necessarily train the mind to make a critical evaluation of facts which entails consistent and coherent judgment. This therefore calls for the critical creative dimension of education. In other words in as much as educational science primarily looks at education in economic terms, manpower needs and job opportunities, educational philosophy looks at the deeper meaning and significance of education which is tied to the meaning of life, particularly human life. This implies that educational philosophy does not equate the use and value of education to monetary terms as the scientist would do. Given that the term education is a multidimensional concept, this paper aims at highlighting the four dimensions by placing emphasis on holistic education based on those four dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The word "philosophy" is a transcription of the concuntated Greek words "philos" and "sophia" meaning "love" and "wisdom", respectively. The knowledge acquired through that "love of wisdom" was referred to as logia, a general concept, equivalent to the Latin term scientia, which meant knowledge. Thus the Greek expression bio-logia (biology), meaning the knowledge (=logia) of life (=bios) stood for all knowledge of life, whether gained by pure thinking, that is by reflection in the philosophical sense or by careful, systematic observation, so characteristic of what we now call 'empirical science'. In ancient times, the example of biology given here is meant to show that originally a philosophos was both a scientist and a philosopher: he was a specialist in knowledge, and as such a Master of Arts and science. This explains why Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher wrote on diverse topics as ethics, politics, fine art, logic, biology and physics. The same can be said of Plato. This is to say that they were all experts of knowledge. Accordingly philosophia came to be called the

mother of all science, of all knowledge, and the most distinguished science, scientia eminentia.

Njoroge and Bennaars (1986) point out that in ancient Greek, a philosophos was a scholar, an academic specialist, who by means of reason alone tried to explore the nature of man and of the world he lived in. In other words, philosophy in this sense was an attempt by man to clarify and if possible to give answers to certain puzzling and fundamental questions in our quest to understand ourselves and the universe we inhabit. Philosophy thus begins in wonder and we engage in it when we are puzzled and are unable to explain why things happen the way they happen.

For instance, philosophers like Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Kepler and Bacon played a very important role before, during and after the 1830s industrial revolution, at this time when 'natural science' (that is, the empirical science of nature) became independent from philosophy owing to the revolutionary development of scientific method, based on observation and experimentation. The physical sciences, particularly physics, biology and chemistry were the first physical sciences to stand on their own, being no longer part of philosophy as before when these sciences were known as 'natural philosophy' They were then followed by social sciences such as sociology, psychology and anthropology, a century later.

Scientific Revolution brought about specialisation in sciences and as a consequence philosophy came to stand alone apparently in total isolation from the world of science. As we speak today, philosophy is not even regarded ironically perhaps- as a science, in the narrow sense of the term, as physics is a science, using empirical methods of investigation having already pointed out that the Latin term scientia means knowledge be it mathematical, philosophical, biological, political, or anthropological knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

The idea of bringing philosophical reflection to bear on any subject matter whatever is tremendously puzzling. Many people talk of such and such philosophy without a clear understanding of its nature. For instance, Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity is associated with the former president of the republic of Kenya, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi Moi, and philosophy of education associated with Dr. Julius Nyerere, the first president of the republic of Tanzania. There are also areas of philosophy namely, philosophy of medicine, philosophy of religion, philosophy of business (business ethics), philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, philosophy of Art, philosophy of law, philosophy of politics (political philosophy), philosophy of mind, philosophy of history, philosophy of language etc. However, without giving a general account of the nature and object of philosophical reflection, one cannot fully comprehend the relevance of philosophy to his own field of research.

Objectives of the Study

This study intends to

- ❖ Investigate the nature and object philosophical reflection; and
- ❖ Point out the relevance of philosophy to educational problems and issues by highlighting the cognitive,

normative, critical (creative) and dialogical dimensions of education.

Expected Output

Having given a general account of the relevance of philosophy to education, one can now begin to have a better understanding of the idea, value and meaning underlying the fact that philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatever and for that matter in almost all the other academic disciplines. One can also clearly comprehend the philosophy behind education subjects such as medicine, religion, business (business ethics), mathematics, biology, anthropology Art, law, politics (political philosophy), philosophy of mind, etc. This will enable better service delivery in terms of teaching of the subjects in question.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Philosophical problems cannot be solved by using microscopes or telescopes in the laboratory. On the contrary, philosophical problems are logical and conceptual problems which require conceptual or logical analysis or investigation. In this regard, this study used logical thinking coupled with cases from a literature review to elicit the meaning of the concept of philosophy and its object within the context of education. The methodology was based on logical and critical analysis a monograph by Njoroge and Bennaars (1986) entitled "Philosophy and Education in Africa: An Introductory Text for Students of Education". The analysis did not simply intend to use the term education in monetary terms as most scientists would do. Rather, it's intended to subject the term education to a critical philosophical inquiry but raising questions and answering them. The following are at the heart of this discussion: (1) what is really education? (2) What is the deeper meaning and significance of education? (3) Is education or teaching primarily the acquisition of technical skills and competency or does the meaning of education go deeper into the meaning of life and particularly human life?

From time to time the study coupled this logical thinking with a literature review to draw cases that support answers to the above questions. For instance, it associates the leadership of the second president of Kenya (Daniel Arap Moi) with the Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity and the first president of Tanzania - Dr. Julius Nyerere's thinking with the philosophy of education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is Philosophy?

In one of his works *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, section 7, G.W.F. Hegel writes: 'Reflection- thinking things over- [is] is the beginning of philosophy'. Each one of us has a philosophy, even though we may not be aware of it. We all have some ideas concerning physical objects, our fellow persons, the meaning of life, death, God, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, and the like. Of course, these ideas are acquired in a variety of ways, and may be vague and confused.

We are continuously engaged, especially during the early years of our lives, in acquiring views and attitudes, from our families, friends, teachers and from various other individuals and groups. This is to say that our way of looking at the world

and even classifying objects in a certain way is not something inborn. Rather it is a fruit of a series of shared meanings which we have acquired, from our parents, teachers and the environment in which we have grown.

These attitudes also may be greatly influenced by movies, television, music lyrics and books. They may result from some reflection on our part, or they more likely may result from a conventional or emotional bias. This broad popular man- in- the-street (*common sense*) view of philosophy is not adequate for our purposes. It does not describe the work and task of the philosopher. We need to define philosophy more specifically; the broad view is vague, confused and superficial.

The word philosophy is derived from the Greek words *philia* (love) and *Sophia* (wisdom) and means 'the love of wisdom'. A definition of philosophy can be offered from a number of perspectives. Here I will present two. Each approach must be kept in mind for a clear understanding of the many meanings of philosophy and what particular philosophers may say about the nature and function of philosophy.

Philosophy is a Set of Views or Beliefs About Life and the Universe Which are Often Held Uncritically.

This is the informal sense of philosophy or 'having' a philosophy. Usually when a person says' my philosophy is' this or that, he/she is referring to an informal personal attitude to whatever topic is being discussed. The former president of Kenya spoke of the philosophy of peace, love and unity and yet every elective period people were being displaced from their homes. Yet he spoke of his philosophy. This is philosophy in the informal general sense of the term.

Philosophy is a Process of Reflecting on and Criticising our Most Deeply Held Conceptions and Beliefs

This is the formal sense of 'doing' philosophy. These two senses of philosophy- 'having' and 'doing' cannot be treated independently of each other, for if we did not *have* a philosophy in the informal personal sense, then we could not *do* a philosophy in the critical, reflective and academic sense.

As regards philosophy in the strict, technical (formal) sense, one can also define philosophy as the attempt to clarify and if possible to answer, a range of puzzling and fundamental questions which arise when, in a general and inclusive way, we try to understand ourselves and the universe we inhabit. Among many other things, these questions concern existence and reality, knowledge and belief, reason and reasoning, truth, meaning, and value both ethical and aesthetic.

The questions themselves are of the form: What is reality?, what kind of things ultimately exist?, what is knowledge and how do we come by it?, how can we be sure that our claims to knowledge are not in some systematic way mistaken? In other words is there any genuine knowledge we can rely on or must we simply depend on opinions and guesses?, what are the canons of correct reasoning?, what is morally the right way to live and act and why? Etc.

Philosophical problems are not problems which can be solved by empirical means- by looking through a telescope or microscope, or by conducting experiments in the laboratory. They are conceptual and logical problems, requiring conceptual and logical investigations. It therefore means that philosophical inquiry is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics. Philosophers therefore are those people who seek to argue on the basis of reason.

Over the millennia, a great investment of genius has been brought to the task of clarifying and answering the questions of philosophy. Some philosophers have attempted to construct explanatory theories, occasionally very elaborate and ambitious in scope; others have tried to clarify and resolve particular questions by painstaking analysis and criticism.

Almost all those who have contributed to philosophy throughout its history have agreed that the matters mentioned above- existence, knowledge, truth, value- are deeply important; and it is upon this consensus that the philosophical debate, which has gone on at least since classical antiquity, has been based.

As I have already pointed out, the fact of 'having' philosophy is not enough for 'doing' philosophy. A genuine philosophical attitude is searching and critical; it is open-minded and tolerant- willing to look at all sides of an issue without prejudice. To philosophise is not merely to read and know philosophy; there are skills of argumentation to be mastered, techniques of analysis to be employed, and a body of material to be appropriated such that we become able to think philosophically.

Philosophers are reflective and critical. They take a second look at the material presented by common sense. In other words, philosophers do not stop at the phase values of things. They attempt to think through a variety of life's problems and to face all the facts involved impartially. That is why I pointed out at the beginning of this paper that the accumulation of knowledge does not by itself lead to understanding, because it does not necessarily teach the mind to make a *critical evaluation* of facts that entail consistent and coherent judgement.

Critical evaluations often differ. Philosophers, theologians, scientists and others disagree, first because they view things from different stand points (points of view) and with different assumptions. Their personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and training may vary widely. This is particularly true of people living at different times and in different places.

A second reason philosophers differ is that they live in a changing universe. People change, society changes and nature changes. Some people are responsive and sensitive to change; others cling to tradition and the status quo, to systems that were formulated sometimes ago and that were declared to be authoritative and final.

The uncritical or blind appeal to authority is an unphilosophical and unscientific method of gaining knowledge, whether the authority is custom, tradition, the family, the church, the state, or the mass media of communication. Uncritical acceptance of authority is called authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism is different from the mere acceptance of the views of a particular authority (such as a specialist) on certain occasions; it is the belief that knowledge is guaranteed and or validated by the authority's words alone. When we accept authority uncritically, we cease our independent efforts to find out what is true or false.

A third reason philosophers disagree is that they deal with an area of human experience in which the evidence is not complete. The evidence we do have may be interpreted in various ways by different people. Despite these disagreements however, philosophers continue to probe, examine, and evaluate the material with the hope of presenting consistent principles by which we can live.

It is therefore of paramount importance to discuss the methodology used in educational sciences and show how it differs from the method (s) used in educational philosophy. Though other fields of study such as education, history, law, theology play an important role in our lives generally and in our endeavours to comprehend the world specifically, one cannot divorce them from philosophy. In our case our concern in this section is with the methodology used in educational sciences and that used in educational philosophy. In spite of the different methods used by educational sciences and philosophy, we cannot say that educational sciences and educational philosophy are mutually exclusive from each other.

Scientific Thinking about Education

In view of the complexity of modern educational problems, modern man has realised the need for specialised thinking about education. In the past most thinking about education tended to be general in character. However, today we require the assistance of educational experts, notably educational scientists, to enable us to think realistically about education. We find then that the scientific method of investigation, underlying scientific research, is increasingly being applied to the study of educational problems. There has been a rapid growth in educational sciences such as educational psychology, the sociology of education, educational planning, the economics of education, educational administration etc.
"Scientific thinking about education has provided us, in the course of time, with very accurate descriptions of educational situations and with detailed analyses of educational problems. In the world today, scientific data on education, in the form of statistical facts and figures, as provided by the educational sciences have become indispensable for the management and development of the educational enterprise" (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986)

It is often on the basis of these data of scientific findings that educational reforms are introduced, that new curricula are proposed, that new educational technologies are tried out. Unfortunately, in view of all these educational innovations and experiments and given time, money and expertise, it may appear that the educational sciences will eventually solve most educational problems, particularly those related to educational practice. Scientific thinking about education is for this reason to be strongly encouraged.

That notwithstanding, scientific thinking about education cannot solve all the problems; it cannot provide all the answers in the area of education. The main reason for this lies in the basic limitations of scientific thinking. Science, almost by definition, is said to be objective and neutral; it is also empirical, concerned as it is primarily with all that is directly observable through the senses and with the help of scientific instruments. Many problems in education however, go beyond what can be scientifically observed; they belong to the areas of ideas, values and beliefs. These particular problems cannot be solved by the educational sciences, because the solution to these problems depends likewise on personal, social, cultural values, ideas and beliefs, all of which are subjective in the fundamental sense of the word. It is worth clarifying what is meant by the term "subjective" to dispel the idea of being biased or false. On the contrary ideas or values or beliefs are subjective in as far as they originate from the Subject, from the person, from man who is the foundation of society. At this subjective level, science is "handicapped" by its own method, which is objective rather than subjective, it can therefore not deal effectively with problems, including educational problems, whose origin can be traced from human subjectivity. This is to say that although it is of paramount importance to recognise the specific need for scientific thinking about education, one must recognise the limitations of such thinking as well. Considering these limitations, including the narrow specialisation of the educational sciences, we must therefore look for alternative ways of thinking that enable one to come to terms with education in a more fundamental and comprehensive manner. Here we point to philosophical thinking about education as a possible answer. We have already pointed out that philosophy examines rationally the fundamental problems affecting man and the world in which he lives hence the definition of philosophy as an attempt to clarify and if possible to give answers to certain fundamental and puzzling problems in our attempt to understand ourselves and the world we inhabit. One of these problems is education. When philosophy examines the problems of education, it does so differently from the sciences. Not only does philosophy employ different methods but its area of concern is also entirely different. Whereas the scientist is primarily interested in facts and figures when searching for evidence, the philosopher is more concerned with the ideas, values and meanings underlying the facts. Although philosophical thinking about education is different from scientific thinking, it may be argued that scientific thinking about education is equally necessary. Educational science and technology are necessary because they are useful, practically speaking and are service-oriented. But the philosophy of education derives its use from being valuable. Its value lies primarily in the fact that in a world fascinated by utility practical sense and accountability, educational philosophy provides room for a vision that goes beyond the categories of use and practicability. It thus provides direction and guidance to man as man accordingly it has a necessary role to play in as far as it tries to liberate man from his own short-sightedness, whereby "use" and "value" tend to be equated only in monetary terms.

"To speak of education in economic terms, in terms of manpower needs and of job opportunities, is the task of educational science. But this is not the only way to speak of education, since the meaning and significance of education go deeper and ultimately touch upon the meaning of life, of human life in the world today" (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). To think about this deeper meaning of education is the task of educational philosophy.

METHODS OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE TECHNICAL ACADEMIC SENSE

Because philosophy begins with wondering and reflecting about our fundamental assumptions, we need to consider how it proceeds to answer questions. Philosophical problems

cannot be solved by appealing exclusively to facts: how then does philosophy solve the problems it raises? What method(s) does philosophy employ? The pluriformity that is so characteristic of philosophy as an academic discipline and that is evident in matters of content is equally obvious when one examines philosophical methodology. "Unlike science which is defined by its method- the scientific method- and thus presents a clear and well defined picture, philosophy employs a variety of methods; this variety finds its origin in the complex character of philosophy itself" Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986) . Philosophy has no single well defined task. On the contrary, it has many tasks, many functions. Each of the tasks or functions has an underlying particular method, a particular way of doing philosophy.

There are four broad functions of technical philosophy, namely the critical, the rational, the phenomenological and the speculative function. "We have defined philosophy in the technical sense of the term as a process of reflecting on and criticising our most deeply held beliefs. To achieve that end, we believe that the basic method of philosophical inquiry is dialectical. Dialectic necessarily involves critical reflection" (Titus *et al*, 1995). This function of philosophy as an academic discipline is historically found a lasting expression in the questioning attitude of the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (Socratic dialectic). Accordingly we speak of the Socratic Method in philosophy, a method that emphasises critical questioning. The critical function of philosophy tends to encourage honesty of thought; it seeks to protect man from fanaticism and hypocrisy, from intolerance and dogmatism, from slogans and ideologies. In other words, it aims at liberating man from narrow-mindedness.

This is to say that philosophy proceeds through the dialectic of argument. The term dialectic refers to a process of thinking that as we have pointed out originated with the philosopher Socrates. In Plato´s dialogues, Socrates is the main character- the protagonist. Socrates employs the method of dialectic; he engages in argumentation, in a relentless analysis of any and every subject. He was convinced that the surest way to attain reliable knowledge was through the practice of disciplined conversation, with the investigator acting as an intellectual midwife; we call the method he used dialectic. It is a deceptively simple technique. It always begins with a discussion of the most commonly accepted aspects of any problem. The dialectical process is a dialogue between opposing positions.

Socrates and many later philosophers believed that through the process of this dialogue, in which each participant in the conversation was forced to clarify his or her ideas, the final outcome of the conversation would be a clear statement of what was meant. What is important is that the dialectic is the development of thought through an interplay of ideas. "Dialectical thinking, and consequently dialectic as a method, attempts to develop a sustained pattern of argument in which the implications of different positions are drawn out and interact with each other. As the argument unfolds we find that neither position represents a complete understanding of the truth; new considerations and alternatives emerge. At each stage of the dialectic we gain a deeper insight into the original problem, and by so doing, perhaps come closer to the truth" (Titus *et al*, 1995) When entering a course of study, for instance education or mathematics, a student is generally prepared to memorise facts, learn formulas, or master a set of material; philosophy demands something quite different. By using the dialectical method, we come closer to the truth but often, in fact frequently, the original philosophical problem remains unsolved. There are always more questions to be asked, more arguments to be challenged. The student of philosophy, however, must not despair. With this method we can arrive at tentative answers; some answers will appear to be more satisfactory than others, some we will abandon all together. This explains why Wittgenstein defined philosophy as an attempt to clarify and if possible to give answers to certain puzzling und fundamental problems in our attempt to understand ourselves and the universe we inhabit.

In Socratic fashion, philosophy proceeds by attempting to correct incomplete or inaccurate notions, by "coaxing" the truth out of the situations. He is famous for his belief that the unexamined life is not worth living. Similarly philosophy proceeds with the conviction that the unexamined idea is not worth having.

Related to the critical function in various ways, but distinct from it, is the rational function of philosophy. Professional philosophers have always placed emphasis on the need for logical and systematic thinking; hence their interests in logic, being the study of correct reasoning for logic is not just about any kind of reasoning but correct reasoning; what constitutes correct reasoning and why it is correct. Thinking that is logical and systematic must not be haphazard or confused; it should be clear thinking, which makes the necessary distinctions, separating clearly what is essential, what matters from what is accidental and of less importance. "Such thinking is primarily analytical: it cuts an issue into parts, as it war; it analyses concepts and statements. But following the analysis, the philosopher tries to put things together; he aims at synthesis, at seeing things in their totality, as interrelated within an overall framework." (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986)
The rational function stresses the method of reasoning. Analysis or synthesis, the rational character of technical philosophy is clearly evident, so much so that philosophers have often been accused of being too logical or too rationalistic. They seem to rely almost exclusively on the mind as the sole source of knowledge, thereby neglecting ordinary sense experience.

To overcome the problem of being too rationalistic, contemporary philosophers, notably the existentialists, have advocated a return to ordinary experience. This brings us to the third function of philosophy, namely the phenomenological function, to use a highly technical term; it may also be called the existential function. Existentialism is an approach to philosophy which is concerned with how an individual is supposed to live his or her life, beginning with concrete individual experiences as opposed to abstract theoretical principles.

Contemporary philosophers point out that "philosophical reflection must start from ordinary human experience; it is through experience that we know the world around us, that things in this world appear to us and show themselves" (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). In this context, philosophers use the term "phenomenon", to mean something that appears to us through experience.

The same philosophers also argue that the way things appear to someone, the way one perceives or experiences things (phenomena), may differ from the way they appear to others. These differences are not the philosophical concerns. Rather the philosophical concern is to discover the underlying meaning in order to arrive at a profound understanding of phenomena. Such understanding implies going beyond particular experiences in a reflective manner. In other words, one must come to terms with the most basic, yet common human experience of things in everyday life. For instance the human experience of pan, joy, suffering, fear, frustration etc. "By reflecting on such basic human experience, the philosopher may be able to explain the experience of e.g. of fear not in an abstract scientific terms but in concrete existential terms, indicating the manner in which this experience affects our lives, our whole being or existence. In short through the reflective method, philosophers try to come to terms with the meaning and significance of human life, of human existence, as we experience it every day." (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986) What is worth taking note of is that such contemporary philosophers no longer think with their heads in the cloud. Rather they have come down to earth. This is to say that their starting point for philosophical reflection is ordinary human experience, which is considered and reconsidered in the light of fundamental human values.

The last task of philosophy in the technical academic sense is the speculative or metaphysical one. By and large the pressing problems of daily life there still remain the basic issues of life such as death, suffering and happiness to which there is no simple answer. It seems that man is not satisfied with knowing what happens to him. He also wants to know why. Many people believe that such issues can only be explained and clarified in religious terms. Most revealed religions, e.g. Christianity and Islam is thought to provide the final answer, the last word in these vital matters. On the other hand philosophers prefer to explain these issues by resorting to the use of human reason. They do not look down upon religion, but merely want to challenge the human mind as far as possible to its ultimate limits, in trying to understand what is apparently incomprehensible. This explains why metaphysics is concerned with comprehensive thinking about the ultimate nature of things.

With no answers easily available, philosophers tend to be very cautious in their approach. In this regard´, they rely primarily on the world of philosophy, "the method of speculation; that is rational speculation or speculative thinking." (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986) Having expounded on the various tasks or functions of philosophy, it is imperative to use a variety of methods, ranging from meticulous analysis to broad speculation. This is to say that philosophy attempts to accomplish its multiple tasks by employing a variety of methods; "thus philosophy is critical in its liberating task, rational in analysis and synthesis, reflexive about human experience and speculative about the basic issues of life" (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986) In spite of the technical terminology used here, we presume that one thing is clear: that philosophy tries to investigate rationally certain fundamental problems about the nature of man and the world he lives in. Such a rational investigation may take many forms, depending on the methods used. In other words, philosophical inquiry is essentially the application of reasoning to a wide variety of topics. This explains why

giving a concise definition of philosophy is not an easy task. The major contributing factor to the difficulty of defining philosophy has to do with the vastness of its subject matter. "The scope and subject matter of philosophy includes the whole universe. There is nothing in the universe that does not concern or interest philosophy" (F. Ochieng´ Odhiambo, 2009). Given that philosophy is interested in all that there was, is and will be, it follows that it is the most general of all forms of human inquiry and it encompasses virtually all forms of human cognition ranging from the pure to the social sciences, from education to the humanities. Its vastness and generality is peculiar to it and it is primarily what sets it apart from other forms of human inquiry.

Unlike the other forms of human inquiry, philosophy takes anything and everything for its subject matter be it in the area of physics, mathematics, history and so on.

"Philosophy, while using the facts and descriptive material presented by other (specialised) fields of study, goes beyond description to inquire in to the nature, the values and the possibilities of things. Its goal is inclusive, comprehension and wisdom." (F. Ochieng´ Odhiambo, 2009) Concerning the relationship between philosophy and other fields of human inquiry, we have already pointed out that philosophy is interested in the subject matters of all other disciplines. However, it cannot do without their results. Philosophy constantly interrogates and assesses the subject matters of the various kinds fields of inquiry with a view of coming up with a conception of the universe that is coherent and systematic.

The Relevance of Philosophy to Education

The concept of education is a multi-dimensional concept involving four distinct dimensions: cognitive, the normative, creative and dialogical dimensions. In education, focus is placed on imparting, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

'Philosophical reflection can be brought to bear on any subject matter whatsoever. Every discipline raises questions which philosophical investigation can help clarify; and every domain of human existence confronts us with problems on which philosophical reflection can shed light. The study of philosophy can help students in all the ways this suggests and the philosophical techniques they assimilate can help them both in their other academic work and in their general problem solving over the years' (Titus, Smith and Nolan, 1995).

We need to talk about the rational function of educational philosophy which emanates from technical or formal philosophy. In other words, 'the rational function will help the students of education to think logically, systematically, consistently about educational problems. In as far as philosophical thinking about education encourages clarification of meanings and justification of statements, the philosophy of education may even be regarded as being 'very useful, apart from being valuable as a discipline in its own right' (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986).

The value of educational philosophy must be stressed more than before especially in our contemporary era where most teachers and teachers to be have been made to believe that teaching is primarily a matter of acquiring technical skills and competency. However, if education is to be meaningful in human terms, knowledge of the subject-matter and

competency in teaching skills though necessary are not sufficient. An insight into the whole of teaching is required.

The students need also to know what they are doing and why they are going it. More importantly, they need to know what education is all about, its deeper meaning and significance for the man of today and for the society at large. Practical experience and scientific know-how are indispensable for the proper management of educational enterprise, in the classroom, in the school, at the national level, but if educational is to be meaningful in human terms then education experience and educational science must be integrated with philosophical thinking about education.

The study of philosophy nurtures our capacity for making informed choices because shallowness, incompleteness, poor reasoning and assertions with flimsy foundations prevent a truly enlightened citizenry. He who has studied philosophy is more likely to pursue an issue in depth. Everyone thinks it is our nature to think critically. But much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce, make, or build depends precisely on the quality of our thought.

Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Excellence in thought, however, must be systematically cultivated. Philosophy programs in higher education are therefore designed with a view to helping students develop some of the skills required to form intelligent opinions, make good decisions and determine the best courses of action- as well as recognise when someone else' reasoning is faulty or manipulative.

Throughout most of the 19th century, the most important course in the college curriculum was moral philosophy or ethics which is one of the main branches of philosophy. Moral philosophy was regarded as the capstone of the curriculum. It aimed to pull together, to integrate, and to give meaning and purpose to the student's entire college experience and course of study. In so doing it even more importantly sought to equip the graduating seniors with the ethical sensitivity and insight needed in order to put their newly acquired knowledge to use in ways that would benefit not only themselves and their own personal achievement, but the larger society as well (Sloan, quoted in Amy, 1983).

The question of morality- what is right and what is wrong in human relations-may be the central issue of our time. In other words, the study of values, of norms, of standards is characteristically a philosophical concern. Other questions that are thought to outrank this one in importance- such as how we should relate to modern technology, or how nations should act in the interest of maintaining peace and of the future of the civilised world are also moral questions. Classes in ethics or moral philosophy should be taught not only in the undergraduate curriculum but also in the professional schools. Doctors, lawyers, and school and public administrators should attend seminars about morality the reason being that ethics or moral philosophy is a very special concern in view of its link with education. Our techniques and skills have developed faster than our comprehension of our goals and values; perhaps the renewed interest in these ends will help to provide us with much-needed answers to the crises and anxiety that are part of our lives.

Individuals are continually judging their own conduct and that of their fellows. They approve of some acts and call them 'right' or 'good'. They condemn other acts and call them 'wrong' or 'evil'. 'Moral judgements always have to do with the actions of human beings, and in particular, with voluntary actions- those actions freely chosen' (Titus *et al.,* 1995).

However, involuntary actions are those actions over which people have no control hence are rarely open to moral judgement, as a person usually is not held responsible for an action that he or she did not initiate. This explains why ethics is referred to as the philosophical study of voluntary human action, with the purpose of determining what types of activity are good, rights, and to be done, or bad, wrong, and not to be done or avoided, so that man may live well.

We can also define ethics as the philosophical study of morality. In his work The Elements of Philosophy: A Compendium for philosophers and theologians, Wallace defined morality as 'the quality attributed to human action by reason of its conformity to the standard or rule according to which it should be regulated' (William, 1977).

This supposes on the one hand, that human actions are voluntary and responsible and on the other, that there is a standard or rule by which human conduct can be measured. Such a standard, however, is provided by the end or supreme good of man, which consists in action that is most in accord with his nature, viz, virtuous living as specified by right reason.

Another norm is more extrinsic to man, namely law**.** These two norms or standard are related. Man's end sets the norm against which the morality of his actions is to be judged, and in terms of which the species of morality can be determined.

In this paper, it is worth noting that I use the term ethics and moral philosophy interchangeably in that the term ethics is etymologically connected with the Greek *ethos*, meaning custom or conduct, and is equivalent in meaning to moral philosophy, which is similarly connected with the Latin *mores,* meaning customs or behaviour. 'It is generally regarded as a practical science, in the sense that the objective of the study is not simply to know, but to know which actions should be done and which should be avoided, so as properly to translate knowledge into action' (William, 1977).

Despite our amazing advances, many thoughtful people are anxious and disturbed. They are concerned that our physical power, scientific knowledge and wealth stand in sharp contrast with the failure of governments and individuals to come to grips with the intellectual and moral problems of life. In other words, knowledge seems divorced from values; it is possible to have great power without insight. That is why the introduction of ethics in the curriculum is important because ethics, being a practical science is not only concerned with knowing but also knowing what is right and to be done and what is wrong and to be avoided so that knowledge is translated into action.

It does not serve any purpose to train a student in commerce who excels with a distinction or first honours but who does not uphold sound moral values in the field of work. This explains the importance of business ethics in commerce and MBA programs. What then are the basic philosophical issues in Business Ethics? Moral philosophers take a special interest in right and wrong, good and bad, duty and obligation. When

this interest is focused primarily on economic matters, that is, on 'business' in the widest sense, the examination is called business ethics, which is another field of applied ethics. Text books and anthologies abound in the business ethics field (Shaw and Barry, 1992). After a brief, general introduction to descriptive ethics and normative ethics and metaethics, at times referred to as critical ethics, authors frequently begin by pointing to issues of preferential hiring and reverse discrimination.

Before embarking on the basic philosophical issues in business ethics, it is of paramount importance to explain briefly what is meant by descriptive, normative and metaethics. In descriptive ethics, the primary concern is with the actual conduct of individuals- or personal morality- and of groups- or social morality. This purely descriptive examination is distinguished from normative ethics which is concerned with the principles by which we ought to live.

From the time of the early Greeks, principles of explanation have been formulated and ethical theories have been set forth. Plato expressed the importance of these principles more than two thousand years ago: 'For you, Callicles, that our conversation is on the subject which should engage the most serious attention of any one who has particle of intelligence: in what way should one live one's life' (Plato, 1952).

The highest values by which moral judgements are made are often referred to as norms, principles, ideas or standards. For instance, some philosophers have chosen happiness as the highest value by which we should judge morality; happiness may also be regarded as a norm, a principle, an idea or a standard. As one considers this norm, one might develop additional principles consistent with happiness, such as pleasure.

There is also the area of critical ethics, or metaethics. Here, emphasis is placed on the analysis and meaning of the terms and language used in ethical discourse and the kind of reasoning used to justify ethical statements. However in this paper I am more concerned with normative ethics than descriptive or metaethics because it is an attempt to seek to establish criteria by which individuals can judge whether an action should be regarded as right or wrong.

With regard the basic philosophical issues in business ethics; it is the task of the moral philosopher to make some useful distinctions as to kinds of preferential hiring- for example, using a quota system or assigning 'extra credit' to individuals from certain groups. Affirmative action presents a serious moral dilemma.

Other qualifications being equal, preferential hiring is the hiring of one person rather than another on the basis of some non-job related characteristic, such as sex, race, tribe or religion. Is preferential hiring a form of discrimination and therefore immoral? Of course yes. People should be hired on merit. This requires the employer to uphold sound moral values.

In business ethics students are taught on the importance of free expression in the market place and the so called whistle-blowing, in which an employee makes known, either within the corporation or publicly business activities he or she believes are unethical. This form of free speech is prompted by an event or condition that the whistle-blower views as immoral and that would probably go unnoticed otherwise.

The crucial moral issue is that an employee's views about an activity or business practice (for instance the safety of a product) can conflict with the economic well- being of the company. It is also equally important that the students know of the importance of the right free expression in the work place and to help develop policies for protecting that free expression.

In the business sphere, there is also need of 'an employee's autonomy in the workplace; the responsibilities and duties to an employer; ethical issues in advertising; the concept of corporate responsibility; 'business concerns versus environmental protection; or the responsibility the corporation has to maintain a safe, clean environment, and the possible conflict of ethics in a multinational situation in which a complete set of moral principles may differ one from the other' (Titus *et al.,* 1995). Investors are therefore exhorted to be more socially conscious and to analyse their portfolios for political and philosophical implications.

Nevertheless, there are no simple solutions to these issues, but philosophy can help people delineate the problems and develop general guidelines since philosophy is an attempt to clarify and if possible to give answer to certain puzzling and fundamental problems in our attempt to understand ourselves and the universe we inhabit.

As one distinguished corporate leader has written: 'If the company, from the top executives on down, embraces a certain standard of ethical and moral conduct, it can create an environment that supports consistent ethical conduct and leads to greater cohesiveness within a corporate structure' (Seibert, 1983).

In almost all faculties of education in higher institutions of leaning, philosophy of education has been introduced as an educational discipline. It is therefore imperative to introduce students to technical or formal philosophy if at all philosophy of education is to be meaningful as an educational discipline. 'Since the philosophy of education is an integral part of technical philosophy, the former cannot be studied without some knowledge of the latter, however rudimentary' (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). Despite the fact that a formal introduction to technical philosophy is of paramount importance to students of education, technical or formal philosophy still remains an academic discipline in its own right.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having given a general account of the relevance of philosophy to education, one can now begin to have a better understanding of the idea behind using the term philosophy in almost all the other academic disciplines. Many times we talk of so and so philosophy like in the case of Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity which is associated with the former president Moi, Nyerere's philosophy of education. We also talk about philosophy of medicine, philosophy of religion, philosophy of business (business ethics), philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, philosophy of Art, philosophy of law, philosophy of politics (political philosophy), philosophy of mind etc. For instance, the formal object of philosophy is all reality (all aspects of reality) as

opposed to other sciences such as physics whose formal object is one aspect of reality. Philosophy does not take anything for granted and I a said earlier we engage in it when we are puzzled and are unable to explain why things happen the way they happen. Philosophy is concerned with both the 'why' and the 'how' question. This is to say that a philosopher knows that man exists and does not only stop at man's existence.

Like in the case of the Greek philosopher Aristotle who said that everything living or non-living has and end (purpose), a philosopher will raise the question concerning the meaning, the purpose or end of man's existence. It is not enough that man exists. We can still ask whether man lives or exists just for the sake of existing or whether man's life is geared towards something.

This explains why in philosophy, there are certain anthropological questions with regard to man's immortality. *Immortality* signifies a certain power to 'always live' and 'not die' (St. Thomas- Sentences). Concretely, immortality means the continual and perennial existence of the spiritual dimension of man, the soul. It is the survival of the identity of the human being after the death of the body. Death is an ever present potency, constantly interweaving itself with life and threatening it. Man is always in the possibility of death.

With regard to every being, we can ask two fundamental questions: whether it is, and what it is. The first question concern's the being's existence; the second concerns its essence. Existence is that which makes a being exist, which makes it real. Essence is that which makes a being that which it is. Pure existence is pure perfection, pure act. Of itself, it is unlimited. Wherever existence is limited, that limitation must come from another principle which is called essence. A being which is only existence, which is its own existence, is of necessity infinitely perfect. God is his existence. But it is clear from language alone that we are not existence, not even our own existence. We posses existence, we participate in existence (being), we share it with other beings.

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