

Abstract

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. Yet 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.