

LECTURE 8

PERSONAL IDENTITY AND THE TRANSFORMING ROLE OF QUALITY EDUCATION

What makes you you?

-Is it your body? - Your name? - Your mind? Your values, beliefs, character, convictions?

-With modern technology and the reality of organ transplantation, suppose you have new heart, new brain, would you still be the same person?

-Factors – that make up the identity of person include

- Heredity factors
- Society – product of society
- Personal initiative

-Who am I? I am a human person, self – conscious rational being

-We are always becoming, not see oneself as a finished product but in process of becoming more and better human persons.

-Who am I involves knowing and discovering our potentials/possibilities (We choose who we are and become) but also our limitations

-Who am I therefore calls for self-examination.

Socrates the Exemplar Of Self – Examination

-Socrates demonstrates the importance of self – examination

-Socrates maintained that as an **unexamined life** is not worth living

-He believed that his role in society was to make people examine themselves.

-He kept on telling his compatriots, his fellow Athenians; know thyself because; an unexamined life was not worthy living.

-Socrates played it dual role in this endeavour.

Role of a Gadfly

-Like a gadfly he kept on stinging and nagging fellow Athenians, not to stop thinking for themselves.

-He argued that an individual who was aware of his ignorance was much better intellectually than who was not because he would strive to know.

Role of Midwife

-Socrates likened his position in society to that of midwife.

-He saw himself as merely assisting others to deliver dormant knowledge or ideas they already had in their minds, in the same way as midwives help mothers to deliver their babies.

-He believed that all people had the capacity to know for themselves what they required was the proper environment and method to realize their potential

-Towards this end he developed a method that came to be known as the Socratic- method, which was essentially interlocutory.

-Socrates believed in the live exchange and debate of issues as the best way to generate knowledge, this way he revolutionized thinking and gave philosophy its methods of questioning and argumentation

Self Examination

-Self – examination therefore involves self-knowledge, i.e. to be acquainted with oneself as a conscious, rational being.

-Self-knowledge in turn reveals what kind of person that we are and what we aspire to be. Thus we ask questions like- what kind of person should I become, how best can I become that person that I ought to be

-Self-examination is an inquiry into oneself; it is the beginning of wisdom.

-The process of self – examination reveals and enhances a person's individuality creativity and innovativeness

-It reveals one's potentials and possibilities but also limitations.

TRANSFORMING ROLE OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Popular Conception of Education

- There is a popular conception of education that equates education with schooling.
- By this conception, a person is considered educated if one has spent some years in school, in the process of which he has gained certificates, diplomas and degrees.
- Thus education is seen mainly in terms of acquiring knowledge for the purpose of passing examinations.
- In this sense, education becomes a sort of package; each package has a label attached to it, which indicates its value – mainly understood in narrow economic terms. This also applies to the subjects studied.

What is the Problem with such Conceptualization of Education?

- This approach tends to encourage learners to develop the tendency of accepting the word of the teacher and the text without questioning – take it uncritically.
- This way learning degenerates to a simple process of conditioning and brainwashing; this is what Paulo Freire called the *BANKING* concept of education.
- Here, the teacher deposits “knowledge” in the learners’ supposedly empty heads in the same way one deposits money in the bank.
- In turn, the learners are expected to guard this knowledge jealously till it is demanded back from them – at the time of *EXAMINATION*.
- Thus the learner acts like a depository, an empty vessel to be filled – *Bucket theory*
- This encourages pure *ROTE LEARNING*
- In the end, learners acquire notions, ideas etc without really internalizing them, without understanding them.
- They become *AUTOMATONS*. They have not been affected or infected by education; they in a word cannot operate independently.

HENCE quality education must incorporate elements of criticality and creativity. This is because of the following reasons:

1. Education, Knowledge and Understanding

- Quality education must involve knowledge, knowing and understanding
- Learning is a process, an activity, a task that may lead to knowing - but not necessarily.
- Knowing on the other hand is a product, an accomplishment, an achievement, an outcome.
- It's critical therefore to note that one is said to have acquired knowledge and understanding when one has internalized what s/he has learnt; that is, one has internalized the grounds for belief and conviction.

- Knowledge must affect the person personally and change or transform that person
- Knowledge is therefore a result of an activity by the person. It cannot be acquired passively. The individual must be actively and directly involved
- It is in this sense that education is supposed to *TRANSFORM* an individual into one who thinks for oneself.

2. Education and Liberation

- Quality education must play an important role in liberating individuals from narrow-mindedness. It must widen the scope of awareness and perceptibility of issues.
- When we talk of awareness we mean awareness that is critical and reflective.
- This means that education makes us critically and reflectively aware of our potentials/possibilities but also our limitations.
- This awareness may lead to self-reliance and the ability of an individual to realize oneself
- A learner is somebody who is not yet self-reliant or independent – hence education must make the learner self-reliant and independent.
- Self-reliance is an ideal to be pursued both at individual and social level
- Thus, education must liberate and hence transform individuals and societies into independence and self-reliance. This is quite urgent in Africa (Kwasi Wiredu).

3. Role of Education in Cultivating /Enhancing Creativity

- Creativity simply refers to the human ability to respond to their natural world.
- Through creativity, through work, human beings become better beings.
- Through this process, human beings create a new world, a human world, world of culture.
- Creativity is an ability that is common to all; creativity applies to all kinds of activities, situations.
- Thus, creative thinking must be encouraged and fostered through education – not only in art, drama, music, but in all other disciplines.
- Thus a good education must foster the learner's capacity to thinking creatively and imaginatively.
- Creative thinking *TRANSFORMS* individuals and societies from state of dependence to state of autonomy and independence e.g. creativity sets new precedents, new ways of doing things.
- Creativity enhances individuals' and societies' capacity to think outside the Box.

4. Role of Education in Enhancing Sociality

- Man is sometimes characterized as being in the process of *BECOMING*
- Man is limited, incomplete subject; man is not a finished perfect being.
- Man is always *BECOMING*- this is possible through and together with others - it implies co-existence.
- As I have a right to exist others also have their right, which I must recognize, and respect – hence there is need for mutual respect and understanding.
- This way, people establish and improve their inter-subjective relationships that form the basis of sociality.

- Education, simplistically understood as schooling has been criticized as producing individuals who may be highly qualified, competitive in their areas of expertise, but impossible to live with – social liabilities.
- Thus quality education must sharpen an individual's social skills and enhance inter-subjective relations.

5. Role of Education in the Cultivation of Moral Sensibilities/Values.

- As pointed out, man must co-exist with others – in order to realize oneself
- Man as a SOCIAL BEING- can only realize himself through others.
- Hence it is not in the interest of any individual to destroy others by selfish and aggressive activities.
- At the very least man must allow others to exist.
- Hence the need for moral values that can guide such co-existence.
- Education must at least play an important role in inculcating desirable traits/dispositions of character, in short moral values.
- At best, quality education must aim at producing autonomous moral agents.
- Moral autonomy simply means that individuals be originators of their moral standards/values.
- This means that individuals take personal responsibility for their actions and act only on convictions that are founded on fundamental beliefs, values and principles.
- Morality at its ideal best is self-imposed; it's from within the individual.
- Quality education – must therefore enhance and sharpen our moral sensibilities and improve our capacity for making choices and decisions.
- TRANSFORM – individuals from being other- directed to being self-directed and societies - to accept only those values that are rationally grounded

6. Role of Criticality and Creativity in Transforming Our Education System

- Making it more critical (by promoting reflection, questioning or active participation) and creative (by enhancing innovation, generation of new ideas etc).
- Developing all potentialities and possibilities.
- Not thinking in narrow economic terms only.
- Critical and creative thinking should inculcate the ability to form an opinion for oneself, which involves being able to recognize what is intended to mislead, being capable of listening to eloquence without being carried away, and becoming adept at asking and determining if there is any reason to think that our beliefs are true;
- Critical and creative thinking should inculcate the ability to find an impartial solution, which involves learning to recognize and control our own biases, coming to view our own beliefs with the same detachment with which we view the beliefs of others, judging issues on their merits, trying to ascertain the relevant facts, and the power of weighing arguments;
- Critical and creative thinking should inculcate the ability to identify and question assumptions, which involves learning not to be credulous, applying constructive doubt in order to test unexamined beliefs, and resisting the notion that some authority, a great philosopher perhaps, has captured the whole truth.

