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The Fallacies of the Professional Educators (Philosophical & Psychological Perspectives)

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Abstract: - This Essay sought to examine the three cardinal sins of Professional Educators. These sins of omission and commission are herein referred to as Educational Fallacies of the positivistic nature, the evaluation policy fallacy and the fallacy of the Romantic nature. These fallacies tend to lay undue emphasis on either the Cognitive dimensions of Learning or Affective domain of learning, yet Education is not a disjunctive activity, it is a conjunctive activity (a both-and kind of process). Real Education is not an exclusive discriminatory activity as propounded by the fallacies; instead it is an inclusive liberal process.

I. INTRODUCTION

A fallacy is a logical error in reasoning that occurs when premises of a given argument do not support the conclusion they purport to support. In everyday conversations and decision-making processes, fallacies abound. Some of the fallacies are religious while others are political fallacies, Educational or otherwise. Educational fallacies can be multiple. However, this essay examines two fallacies which are at the same time opposed as they are related and influence each other. These are the Rationalistic Fallacy and the doctrine of Romantic fallacy. Ipso facto, the precipices towards a malfunctioned Education are an exclusionary dualism that either emphasises the intellect over the affections or affections over the intellect. Exaggerated and exclusionary bias towards intellect is referred to as a 'Positivistic Fallacy' while extreme affectionism in Education might be christened 'Romantic Fallacy'. These two fallacies have considerably affected modern intellectual endeavours, but they are most pronounced among professional educators.¹

II. THE POSITIVISTIC FALLACY

According to Thomas Gradgrind (as cited by Cothran), Education must be factual, He asserts, "Now, what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!" According to Gradgrind, Education is

valid if and only if it is scientific and experiential leading to the particular bias towards non-empirical branches of Knowledge, this is an indication that all that matters is scientific and empirical facts. Such is the tenet of Positivistic Fallacy according to which a person goes to school to take his/her place as a cog in the modern economy. A good student is one who weighs and measures everything concerning human nature and determines exactly what it comes to using figures and arithmetic. The zenith of this Educational point de vue is the appeal to, and over-emphasis in Analysis or a kind of dissection. It is believed that such kind of analysis can only be offered and facilitated exclusively by Science. As a result of this fallacy and exaggeration of facts and empirics, Trillions of dollars of taxpayer funds are expended every year to promote vocational initiatives and "STEM" (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and in some cases to the detriment of humanities. One other aspect of this fallacy is the clamour to communicate to Parents the assessment of their children using quantification methods. While it makes sense to communicate Educational output in some measurable criteria the question that begs the answers is, can understanding, cognition, norms, relations and creativity be measured by number? Can morality and socialisation as aims of Education be assessed using numbers? While it is vital that learners be exposed to cognitive training, insisting that it is the only real source of knowledge is to commit not just an epistemological sin but to denigrate science. This point of view is in itself *Scientistic*. Scientism can be defined as the belief, or dogma that Science is the ONLY meaningful source of knowledge and that it answers solves all human predicament. This belief is connected to positivistic Philosophy whose key project was to destroy the metaphysical outlook of knowledge and reality. While science and scientific facts have played a vital role in solving human problems, it is not scientific to pose itself as imperialistic epistemological propaganda. This is because such propaganda itself has no proven facts. Secondly, humans are not reducible to factual, empirical entities. To learn facts alone without contextualization of those facts is to err, Because even facts themselves are interpreted within contexts, For instance, that $1+1=2$ might be a universal mathematical fact, how it is received, applied and assimilated depends on several contextual factors like economic and religious status. Besides, the Rationalistic Fallacy is a warped utilitarianism especially as seen in its over-emphasis on vocationalism. Utilitarian

¹Includes Teachers and Education Policy makers

ethics may not be wrong in itself but when learners are seen as mere vehicles for out-of-context information conveyed with the aim of promoting industrial production and intended to increase the Gross Domestic Product then a wrong version of utility creeps in. Thirdly, it is a *Quantificationism* and excess and almost idolatrous inclination to numbers. Neil Postman has pointed out that it was only in 1893 that educators started thinking of giving numerical grades to a student paper yet it is evidenced among modern educators who believe that the learning of students can be adequately quantified through tests. Before the error of tests came in great thinkers were made for instance Aristotle, Plato and they have influenced educational thoughts.

III. THE EVALUATION POLICY FALLACY

Psychological principles advocate for the preparation of the learning and the processes involved cumulatively building from the role of the teacher, the learner, the learning environment to the subject matter to ensure that the objectives of education are met. Similarly, learners are aroused when they perceive what they are learning to be meaningful. Equivalent principles then should apply in the measurement of the learning outcomes. Embracing formative evaluation as an unavoidable ultimate measure of the educational outcomes in primary and secondary schools is fallacious. A learner's physical, social, emotional and economic status varies from time to time. This therefore suggests that subjecting a learner to a one match evaluation that would be the determinant to their selection, placement and accreditation is in itself contradictory regardless of the educational approach a system of education draws from. A learner who is emotionally unstable during the examination period but was a student of impressive academic ability is not favored by such a system. In addition, a learner who was exposed to subject matter that they deemed meaningless may perform dismally but this may not certainly imply that the learner is of weak academic ability. The various evaluations that learners go through at different learning levels should form the average attainment of the student in a fair and just education system. The evaluation approach of a system of education should be malleable.

IV. THE ROMANTIC FALLACY (LEARNER CENTRIC ACTIVISM)

The shift in the traditional approach to learning where the teacher was thought to be a monopoly of knowledge invites a kind of fallacious thought that does not adequately articulate the place of the teacher in the learning process. Jean Piaget's theory of constructivist learning, devises the basis of most educational reforms with the learner centered class denoted to as a constructivist classroom. This theory advances that learning is a process constructive in nature, where the learner constructs rather than acquire knowledge. This theoretical orientation has erroneously been regarded as a specific pedagogy. In the true sense, it is not a pedagogical approach but a teaching learning perspective. While the call of a learner

centered approach soars, there has to be an equally weighty concern on the facilitator of this process. How much knowledge the learner constructs independently and how much they draw from the teacher is debatable. How the educator disseminates the content has been disregarded. The teacher is an essential facet because they ensure that students' educational outcomes are attained. The overemphasis on the learner portrays the learner as a numerator and the teacher as a denominator. Additionally, overtime there has been an emphasis on the learner's state physically, emotionally, socially, economically and the achievement of developmental tasks as a critical prelude before any meaningful learning betides. According to Jerome Bruner, instructional scaffolding is an important educational framework that implies that learning can take place if the learners are provided with the necessary guidance and that guidance should be provided in the right way and at the right time. The guidance here incorporates the role of the teacher. Perhaps a one directional emphasis on the learners needs to be reconsidered and a balance struck on the role of the all the components of learning that encompasses the learner, the teacher, the learning environment and the subject matter. For an effective implementation of such a research-supported educational approach there has to be cooperation between the learner and the teacher. As such, the expected educational outcomes of such a model may not be fully realized if the teacher who is factually the knower, lacks in motivation and is emotionally overwhelmed by the workload and feels as though the educational policy makers have neglected their roles. The schoolroom stimulation factor centrally relies on the teacher's ignition of the learners. Reinforcement of the learning outcomes coupled with providing an environment that enables learning as propounded by the behaviorists in Skinner's theory of operant conditioning draws from the teacher towards the learners. Therefore, there is need to embrace a third force approach that will depict the learner and the teacher as playing a cooperative role.

V. CONCLUSION: A SYNTHESIS

These three extremes are frowned upon by any balanced Educational system which should seek to engage in a fundamental and solid grounding in the liberal arts which gives students the ability to think critically. Critical thinking is a skill that comes in handy because of its 'perenniality'. It can be used by learners in further academic study or at a job place. Liberal arts give learners the knowledge and the ability to judge wisely as they live as citizens and decision makers in their country. A balanced Education avoids both exaggeration of vocational training that squints the minds of learners and methods that betray a real understanding of the world and their fellow humans in favour of a vague sense of self-esteem.

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