

THE USE OF LITERATURE AS A TOOL FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' PERSONALITY

Dr (Mrs) E. M. Dada

Department of Arts and Language Education, Ekiti State University
joysammy2001@gmail.com

Mr A. S. Olaniyan

Department of Arts and Language Education, Ekiti State University
ayomiku.olaniyan@eksu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: *Man is not just a physical being but also has several other dimensions which include the spiritual (soul and spirit), social, cognitive and emotional aspects; the proper development of all these listed aspects of man can be viewed under the scope of holism. It is not only the intellectual and vocational aspects of human development that need guidance and nurturing, but also the physical, social, moral, aesthetic, artistic and spiritual aspects. As a result, this paper looks at how holistic education can be used in developing Literature-in-English curriculum in Nigeria, the interconnectedness of all aspects of human life vis-a-vis Literature-in-English, its implication on teaching and learning. This paper draws ample instances from two texts from the present West African Examination Council (WAEC) 2016-2020 Literature-in-English syllabus. It concludes by stating that education should be based on experiential learning and should empower all citizens to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the immediate community and society at large. It also advocates that holistic education as an approach to pedagogy meets the needs of all types of learners, serves as a source of fulfilment and gratification for teachers and parents which should therefore be integrated into the Nigerian education at all levels.*

KEY WORDS: holism, pedagogy, literature, interconnectedness, personality and curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Man is not just a physical being but also has several other dimensions which include the spiritual (soul and spirit), social, cognitive and emotional aspects; the proper development of all these listed aspects of man can be viewed under the scope of holism. Holism is concerned with the development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials. The concept of wholeness is at the core of holism. It is a thesis that states that the universe is made up of integrated wholes that cannot be reduced to the sum of their parts. We can never come to know the whole of reality by isolating variables in order to examine small parts. Holism comes from the Greek word 'Holon' that sees the universe as made up of integrated wholes that cannot be reduced in parts. The term "holism" started taking form in the mid-1980s whose foundational theorists include Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Johann Pestalozzi and most recently Maria Montessori, Howard Gardner, Carl Rogers and others.

Holistic Education

Holistic education postulates that each academic programme and discipline should provide a different perspective on the rich, complex, integrated phenomenon of life. It is not only the intellectual and vocational aspects of human development that need guidance and nurturing, but also the physical, social, moral, aesthetic, artistic and spiritual aspects. It seeks to engage students in the teaching/learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibilities.

Forbes and Martin (2004) described the general philosophy of holistic education as freedom of thought, self-governance through sound judgment, students' ability to learn on their own or meta-learning, refining of values through character development, social skills and emotional development or 'self-knowledge'. Miller (2000) explained that holistic education is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to call forth from young people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning. Holistic education is a philosophy that can and should be applied in all subjects in the school. For the purpose of this research, the search light will be beamed on how Literature-in-English can be used as a tool for holistic development of students.

Literature-in-English is important in the English Language curriculum for the junior secondary schools as it is embedded in English Language as a subject, while it is offered as Literature-in-English in senior secondary schools and a core subject at that for Arts-based students. The WAEC/NECO Harmonised Syllabus for Senior Secondary School Literature-in-English (2016 – 2020) has the following as the objectives of teaching Literature-in-English in schools:

- a. Enabling students to learn about the distinctive genres of Literature-in-English (Drama, Prose and Poetry).
- b. Exposing students to different characteristics, approaches, techniques and content of the literary genres.
- c. Helping to mould and form students' good pattern of life and intellectual ability to become good citizens of their nation.
- d. Cultivating critical skills as tools for independent assessment of human issues and to develop students' competence in understanding and analysing literary texts and
- e. Enriching and promoting students' literary appreciation skills (FME, 2015)

In the design of any curriculum and other learning experiences, holistic education is a major part of its framework. Holistic education is centred on the principle of interconnectedness (Johnson, 2006). The principle of interconnectedness is used as a vehicle to develop two kinds of connections: Intrapersonal connections and interpersonal connections.

Intrapersonal connections and the Literature-in-English Curriculum

The central self is the part of a man beyond the ego that some might call the soul. Intrapersonal connections can help students to understand themselves, solve problems, make decisions, and come to know the world using intuition and emotion in conjunction with knowledge and logic. According to Amuta (2014) Literature-in-English helps in the understanding of human nature and self. For instance through drama, a student actor has the opportunity of expression and catharsis of inner desires through the resolution of inner conflict and anxiety. For example, actors frequently find it easier to express their inner and half-understood experiences when wearing a disguise like an

animal costume or clown costume or just a hat sometimes (Korb and Akolo, 2017). This can also be seen from the lense of literary criticism which seeks to discover among other things how writers think, what logic and emotion drives a writer to write a work, how readers perceive a piece of work.

Interpersonal connections and the Literature-in-English Curriculum

Literature-in-English curriculum is used to connect with and understand others. Interpersonal connections can help students develop social and other interpersonal skills with the goal of understanding and learning to live in relationship or harmony with others. Literature-in-English according to the Nigerian philosophy of education has helped people to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom and justice and it has also helped to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding (NPE, 2013).

Literature-in-English curriculum and other educational experiences are used to perceive and understand the world in terms of inter-related systems and interconnected experiences. This might take the form of global education where students see how their daily lives affect or connect with others around the world. This might also take the form of ecological education where students describe their impact on and relationship with the environment. Interpersonal relationships allow students to be fully connected with themselves, others, the local and world communities and to see the interrelationship of all things. This is due to the scope of the recommended texts studied in the subject which usually cover literary works from different parts of Nigeria, Africa and other Non-African countries, and this enables students to get in touch with the lifestyles, customs and cultural practices of people from a wide range of societies which they might never visit physically. Such exposure would help students to develop interest in and appreciate other people's lifestyles, customs and tradition leading to a better world (Amokoedo, 2012). It is crucial for children to learn these values because, "developing positive attitudes toward our own culture and the cultures of others is necessary for both social and personal development" (Norton & Norton, 2010, p. 3)

Literature-in-English plays an important role in the holistic development of the individual's cognitive, psychomotor and emotion domains as follows;

Literature-in-English and Cognitive Development

Literature-in-English is connected to the cognitive domain of an individual through its enhancement of the capacity to discriminate, judge and make decisions (Aiyede 2015). It provides students with the opportunity to respond to literature and develop their own opinions about the topic. Crippen (2012) asserted that quality literary texts (be it prose, drama or poetry) does not tell the reader everything he/she needs to know; it leaves for readers to develop diverse opinion. One reader may take something completely different away from the piece of literature than the next reader, based on two personal viewpoints and experiences. Students can learn to evaluate and analyse literary texts, as well as summarise and hypothesise about the topic. Literature-in-English helps in forming students' characters morally and intellectually; this is due to the fact that instruction in the subject is a means of entertainment and the preservation of customs, beliefs and societal values. Literature-in-English showcases the everyday experience of man and the society.

Furthermore, Literature-in-English helps improve students' academic achievement in other courses. It helps in the improvement of reading skills, especially prose works which students find easy and

interesting to read; the knowledge of new words and how they are used in a story are transferred to other subjects and everyday life. Barry (2010) found that children ages 3-8 years who participate in drama have higher academic achievement. She further stated that drama in early childhood education can ease the transition into new school environment.

Since dramatization and reading of poems use scripts and lines that must be adhered to, the actors and reciters need to develop the ability to memorise; sometimes long scripts and lines depending on the writers. And memorisation has been said to help stimulating the brain and also improve other cognitive processes that are not even linked to the subject (Literature-in-English) at hand (Porter, 2014 and Khamees, 2016).

Literature-in-English and Psychomotor Development

The psychomotor domain according to Simpson (1972) includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. The six major categories of psychomotor domain are; perception (awareness), set (readiness to act), guided response, mechanism, adaptation and origination. Literary art is not limited to works in print but also spoken words in form of poems, chants, story-telling and singing. Furthermore, literary works can sometimes be expressed drama through acting on stage which covers miming, pantomiming, dancing, drumming and many other physical activities; i.e Literature is expressed through prose poetry and drama. Literature-in-English provides avenues for dramatization, demonstration and active participation by the individuals involved; this develops the psychomotor and creative domains of students.

An important aspect of psychomotor domain which the subject affects is communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In dramatic plays, it is important to note that children argue a lot of the times, but not to the extent that they don't listen to each other. In conventional theatre and puppetry, one skill actors and audience learn is to truly listen. When students are either actors or members of the audience, they are trained to listen and wait for cues before they respond. Also, speaking with the right intonation, inflection, stress and dialect for emphasis while acting is an essential aspect in the social development of children. Through the use of dialogue both scripted and improvised, students can learn to speak and appropriately for that matter in other social contexts.

Literature-in-English and Affective Development

Aluko (1990) pined that literature has the capacity to shape an individual's taste, develop his sympathy and empathy, and the way feelings and emotions are expressed. Stories have the power to promote emotional and moral development. Since literature entertains and gives pleasure, it brings man to the realities of human problems and conditions, feelings and relationships. Literary works (especially prose and drama) contains numerous moments of crisis, when characters make moral decisions and contemplate the reasons for their decisions, which is an important skill for students to see modelled by teachers. A ready example is the character of Aloho (in the play Harvest of Corruption written by Ogbeche, 2007) when she was caught with a briefcase filled with narcotics which was unknown to her until customs officials searched her at the airport. Also, another moment of crisis in the play was when Aloho discovered she was pregnant for Chief Haladu, her boss, who she knows would get her sacked and probably get her killed so as to save his face. Aloho in these two instances reflects on her poor choices and wished she knew better.

Literature is the closest claim to truth amongst the arts through its view of life. As a result of this, students are encouraged to develop the desire for achievement, continuous self-education and self-improvement which goes beyond school. Teenage students are very impressionable during the formative years, and Literature can help them become caring, intelligent, and friendly people. Developmental psychologists, according to Crippen (2012), believed that when students move from the pre-operational to the operational stage of cognitive development, they become less egocentric.

Implication of Holistic Education on Literature-in-English Teaching

According to Hare (2010) holistic education represents a new journey for teachers and one in which they will grow and critically examine strongly held values and beliefs. For the educator this could be an unsettling experience; the teacher is moving out of the comfort zone of subject specialization into areas of personal uncertainty. The teacher no longer relies on subject expertise but guides students in developing and examining their own values and prejudices, their critical thinking and behaviour and confronting opinions that are new to them. Frequently, this may be a joint journey of discovery for both students and teachers, with the teachers bringing their greater life experience to the learning process. Many educators have become caught in the trappings of competitive professionalism: tightly controlled credentials and certification, jargon and special techniques, and a professional aloofness from the spiritual, moral and emotional issues inevitably involved in the process of human growth (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012). For proper holistic experience to take place especially in a Literature-in-English class, teachers require the autonomy to design and implement learning environments that are appropriate to the needs of their particular students. Also for proper holistic education to take place through Literature-in-English classrooms, teachers of the subject must be well skilled, well read and must be ready to immerse themselves in the subject so as to reflect if not all but most aspect of life as portrayed in whatever text is being used in the subject. Therefore such teachers must have a thorough understanding of all the texts used for their class.

Holistic principles inspire many home-schooling families as well as educators in public and alternative schools. Miller (2000) emphasized that by fostering collaboration rather than competition in classrooms, teachers help young people feel connected. Also, through the use of real-life experiences, current events, the dramatic arts and other lively sources of knowledge in place of textbook information, teachers can kindle the love of learning. Furthermore, Literature-in-English teachers should encourage reflection and questioning rather than passive memorization of "facts". By accommodating differences and refusing to label children as "learning disabled" or "hyperactive," teachers bring out the unique gifts contained within each child.

Teachers must also examine the learning culture within their school and ensure it is conducive for creating an inclusive learning community that stimulates the growth of students' creative and inquisitive engagement with the world. The aim of every teaching experience would then be the development of healthy and curious individuals who can learn what they need to know and apply it in any new context in which they find themselves and who are self-motivated and confident.

Evidences of a Holistically Educated Student

A number of recurring themes and values can be extracted from a holistically developed student which would reflect in a range of skills and competencies. Forbes and Martin (2004); Hare (2010); Heublein and Zimmermann (2016) highlight such as follows:

1. Acts with social and academic maturity and integrity; such engages accepted conventional wisdom maturely and develops own understanding from this experience.
2. Demonstrates flexibility and a creative approach to problem solving; striking a healthy balance between a goal-oriented and process-oriented approach is what makes a holistic learning experience complete, and reflects the values of holistic understanding.
3. Exhibits self-directed learning. Learners reflect on their learning styles and preferences, and gain awareness of their conditions for successful learning. Also, they use diaries or portfolio tools for self-documentation and self-assessment tools for evaluation.
4. Demonstrates effective communication skills. Such students have sufficient confidence to change and adapt their style of communications per situation or circumstance to meet the expectations and needs of the audience and also to make their points known.
5. Ability to transfer skills between disciplines through an understanding of subject areas, their interdependencies and interrelationships, such students can appreciate the interconnections in human knowledge, and appreciates and debates global issues and the impact of human activity on the environment.

Since learning is a lifelong experience, holistic approach is different from other familiar knowledge-based approaches in that it adopts a planned approach to ensuring development even beyond the four-walls of a classroom and to the broadest level imaginable. It ensures personal and interpersonal skills that will advance considerable advantages to the students' progress beyond formal education.

CONCLUSION

Education should be based on experiential learning and should empower all citizens to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the immediate community and society at large. Education therefore, should be an appreciation for the magnificent diversity of human experience. Holistic education is an approach to pedagogy that meets the needs of all types of learners, can be a source of fulfilment and gratification for teachers and parents. It allows parents and students to make an informed choice when confronted with different educational systems.

For teachers, holistic teaching in Literature-in-English requires a strong awareness of students' needs, display of skills and development of processes. Such teachers open themselves up to more uncertainty than in the "ordinary" teaching learning environment. They need to explain themselves more often most especially if their students have accepted and are used to holistic learning. However, in the long run holistic teachers gain a better understanding of their subject area, are well respected by discerning students and parents, and have broader view of life and the teaching/learning process.

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