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Applicability of Deweyan Pragmatism to Zimbabwe's Contemporary Education System

Dr. Rodwell Kumbirai Wuta

Lecturer, Belvedere Technical Teachers' College, Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The current textual analysis seeks to estimate the applicability of Deweyan pragmatism to Zimbabwe's system of education as encapsulated in Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education for period 2015-2022 [also known herein as Government of Zimbabwe or GoZ (2015) or Curriculum Framework 2015-2022]. This undertaking comes against the background of Education 5.0 which occasioned the ongoing move by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development [MoHTEISTD] in collaboration with University of Zimbabwe [UZ] to scrap Western educational philosophies (Deweyan pragmatism included) from Zimbabwe's teacher education syllabus. Thus, the author is perturbed specifically by the imminent disregard of Deweyan pragmatism as a result of the unmistakable exaltation of the heritage-based philosophy within Zimbabwe's new teacher education syllabus. Having synthesised pragmatist ideas, the current reflection juxtaposes Deweyan pragmatism with Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 in terms of instructional aims, curriculum content, instructional methodology, ideal teacher and school system. Observably, the fundamental aspects of Zimbabwe's education system as portrayed in Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 essentially turn out to be of a Deweyan making. Notwithstanding a few points of divergence between Deweyan pragmatism and Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, the former is on the whole applicable to the latter. This finding readily harmonises with Wuta's (2020) observation that there is a close connection between pragmatism and the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy which currently undergirds education in Zimbabwe. The current reflection, therefore, demonstrates that the idea of peripherising Western philosophies like Deweyan pragmatism is more emotive than rational. This article, thus, implores the MoHTEISTD and UZ to revisit their position (that of wanting to excise Western philosophies) with due sobriety so that they consider restoring Deweyan pragmatism in particular to its rightful place in Zimbabwe's teacher education, specifically in the Educational Foundations (Philosophy) syllabus, for the good of the country's primary and secondary education sector.

Keywords: Applicability, Deweyan Pragmatism, Pragmatists, Contemporary Education, Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe's philosophy of education has evolved significantly from the precolonial era (up to 1890) through the colonial period (1890 to 1980) to postcolonial times (1980 until to date). Thus, the epistemology deemed appropriate for education in Zimbabwe seems to have been changing owing to the historical antecedents that unfolded since the advent of colonialism.

In precolonial Zimbabwe, indigenous African education was rooted in the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy, and this was the case up until 1890 thereabout. The advent of colonial education was synonymous with the negation of *Unhu/Ubuntu* as colonial education was underpinned by the Occidental philosophies of idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism. The attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe in 1980 marked the dawn of postcolonial education, which, in the first ten years, was anchored in Marxist Leninism (scientific socialism). This brief flirtation with socialist ideals lasted only to about 1990 when Zimbabwe's Independence Government silently abandoned socialism as the national

ideology. Thereupon, the country's education system witnessed a relapse into the Occidental philosophies of education that were in place during the colonial era.

In response to the perpetually domineering role played by the Occidental philosophies of education mentioned in the foregoing, local scholars re-kindled and advanced the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy. Consequently, the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* gained currency and traction. Local exponents of this *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy, thus, included Gelfand as from the 1970s, Samkange and Samkange as from 1980, Makuvaza, Nziramasanga, Kaputa, and Hapanyengwi since the 1990s. The author notes that authorities mentioned in the preceding polemically advocate the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy to be Zimbabwe's instructional philosophy, and, in the process, they peripherise, trivialise and virtually eclipse the Western philosophies within the domain of Zimbabwe's education system. It is this epistemic bigotry and the concomitant invisibility of core Western philosophies like Deweyan pragmatism that the current reflection seeks to address.

Moreover, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology

Development [MoHTEISTD], through University of Zimbabwe [UZ], is at an advanced stage of reviewing and revamping Zimbabwe's teacher education syllabi with a view to re-aligning them to Education 5.0. Though to some extent a noble cause, this reform process seems to be taking an unduly radical approach as it seems to over-emphasise the heritage-based philosophy thereby de-emphasising the Western philosophies of education that certainly include Deweyan pragmatism. Thus, the Minimum Bodies of Knowledge and Skills [MBKSs] which are in the process of being instituted by the University of Zimbabwe Department of Teacher Education for study particularly in Educational Foundations (Philosophy) at teachers' college are devoid of Western philosophies. Therefore, Western philosophies like Deweyan pragmatism are bound to disappear from Zimbabwe's teacher education syllabi. Yet it is the author's well considered view that pragmatism continues to inform Zimbabwe's system of education significantly, even in the postcolonial era.

It is against this background that the author undertakes to estimate the applicability of Deweyan pragmatism to Zimbabwe's system of education as encapsulated in Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education for period 2015-2022 [also known herein as Government of Zimbabwe or GoZ (2015) or simply Curriculum Framework 2015-2022].

PROBLEM DECLARATION

The author is perturbed by the unmistakable disdain of Western philosophies in general and Deweyan pragmatism in particular, a predilection consistent with the unambiguous exaltation of the heritage-based philosophy within the new teacher education syllabi currently being designed for Zimbabwe's teachers' colleges. This development is worrisome because it is bound to see Deweyan pragmatism disappear from the country's teacher education syllabi yet the author is convinced that pragmatism continues to inform Zimbabwe's education system even in the postcolonial era. To make matters worse, the discourse on philosophy of education in Zimbabwe is suffused with *Unhu/Ubuntu*. Thus, the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 decrees and declares that Zimbabwe's primary and secondary education should be informed solely by the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy. Admittedly, putting primacy on the home-grown *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy evokes and manifests the highly cherished liberatory-emancipatory principle of critical theory. However, this serves to peripherise the rest of the traditional but informative Western philosophies of education that include Deweyan pragmatism (which happens to be the object of discussion herein). Therefore, the author seeks to appraise Deweyan pragmatism in terms of relevance to education in postcolonial Zimbabwe. This appraisal is hoped to eventually serve as an exhortation for the MoHTEISTD and UZ to revisit their position (that of wanting to expunge Western pedagogies) with due sobriety so that they consider restoring Deweyan

pragmatism in particular to its rightful place within Zimbabwe's teacher education, specifically in the Educational Foundations (Philosophy) syllabus.

A Synopsis of Deweyan Thought

Although roots of pragmatism are traceable to a Briton Francis Bacon [1561-1626 A.D.], pragmatism received its fullest treatment from three Americans: Charles Sanders Pierce [1839-1914 A.D.], William James [1842-1910 A.D.], and John Dewey [1859-1952 A.D.] (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Like Pierce, "James popularised pragmatism, and Dewey 'systematised' it and carried its leading ideas to far-reaching development" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 136). Hence, the popular ascription of pragmatism to Dewey is far from perplexing. Alternative terms that Dewey prefers to use are instrumentalism, empiricism and experimentalism (Akinpelu, 1981).

Deweyan pragmatism disclaims any interest in metaphysics, "especially in the type advanced by the idealist and realist philosophers" (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 143). This connotes that pragmatists want to be without metaphysics. Thus, "they were concerned exclusively with the world as we experience it and as the sciences reveal it to us" (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 143). This demonstrates that cogitation on essential natures of things, speculation about the existence of God and destiny of the human soul are issues outside the pragmatist area of concern and focus.

"If pragmatists are reticent in talking about metaphysics, they are very vocal about their epistemology" (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 144). This demonstrates that pragmatists have strong epistemological assumptions. Their fundamental epistemological position is that knowledge is nothing but human experience processed and refined. Pragmatist knowledge "is the product of the interaction of a living organism with its environment" (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 144). Thus, pragmatists are of the understanding that intelligence is the ability to solve problems and to use the method of reflective thinking in daily life. Hence, the pragmatist tradition argues that "the most intelligent way of solving problems is to use the scientific method" (Philos, Undated, p. 399). The scientific method forms the core of Deweyan pragmatic problem-solving as it involves problem identification, problem definition, formulation of hypotheses, hypothesis testing and inductive argumentation (Akinpelu, 1981; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Consequently, Dewey says "ideas should be tested in the crucible of real-life experience" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 139). This pragmatist notion of 'real-life' evokes the principle of 'relevance' which holds that knowledge obtained through the scientific method should be geared towards solving real-life problems. The experience gained in the process of solving the problem at the end of it all becomes a unit of knowledge. Pragmatists, therefore, "make experience the source of all knowledge. In the same way, they define education in

terms of experience” (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 147). This demonstrates that pragmatists view education as the construction and reconstruction of experience. Truth, from a pragmatist viewpoint, is man-made, modifiable and testable.

As already hinted in the foregoing, the Deweyan experimentalist logic is inductive (Philos, Undated). Thus, tentative assertions are based on empirical experience and must be tested because experimentalist logic is suspicious of *a-priori* truths and deductions based on them (Ibid). Deweyan pragmatism, therefore, embraces the Aristotelian inductive logic which trusts *aposteriori* truths.

The Deweyan pragmatist axiology holds that values, which are man-centred and do not have any divine origin, are changeable (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Deweyan pragmatism, therefore, dismisses the notion of absolute and unchanging truth as Dewey himself asserts that ‘truth is what works’ (Cohen, 1999). Thus, “pragmatic axiology is highly situational. Since man inhabits a constantly changing universe, values, too, must change. Values are relative to time, place, and circumstance” (Philos, n.d., p. 398). Therefore, pragmatism as an anthropocentric philosophy believes that man creates his/her values since these are what he/she cherishes, prizes, desires, wants, needs, or has interest in.

Deweyan Aims of Education and Aims of Zimbabwe’s Education System

According to Dewey (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003), instructional aims should be situation-specific, tentative, flexible, dynamic and enabling – an inclination emblematic of the progressive element of pragmatism. Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 adopts this pragmatic dynamism as it seeks to prepare learners for life and work in a perpetually globalising environment, which calls for the flexibility and adaptability of instructional aims.

Deweyan pragmatism aims to understand learners in terms of mental, emotional, and physical development (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Deweyan pragmatism, thus, aims at holistic education which, in the language of Booker T. Washington, addresses the head (mental), the heart (emotional) and the hand (physical) in raising a complete individual. Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to engender this pragmatist conception of holistic education where it commits to equipping learners with the requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills. Knowledge represents teaching the ‘head’ to think, attitudes evoke teaching one’s ‘heart’ to feel and skills epitomise training of the ‘hand’ to act.

To Dewey, education should seek to make humans understand their own individual and collective experiences thereby promoting both individuality and

sociality. Correspondingly, Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 recognises the exigency of growth in both individuality and sociality through its citizenship education component. Pragmatist education also seeks to capacitate man to cope with the contingencies of life and solve problems of the society. This is endorsed by Akinpelu (1981, p. 147) according to whom “the aim of education is therefore the development of the learners’ ability to deal with future problems, that is the development of his intelligence to solve problems.” Likewise, Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 adopts problem-solving as the over-arching aim and methodology of instruction in Zimbabwe.

Hook (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 146) views growth, democracy and intelligence as the inclusive and related aims of pragmatist education. Following the pragmatist tradition, Kilpatrick (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 147) also conceives the function of education as that of helping people to direct, control and guide personal and social experience for a more democratic way of life. Hence, the pragmatist school of thought underscores that different cultural and ethnic groups should learn to work cooperatively and contribute to a democratic society (Cohen, 1999). Thus, pragmatist schools should foster habits of thought, invention, and initiative that will assist people in growing in the right direction, *id est*, toward democratic living (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Therefore, as Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 commits to using the child-centred approach and imparting citizenship, it inescapably accentuates the democratic principle of pragmatism. As the said framework commits to enhancing problem-solving, it certainly manifests the pragmatist ideal of intelligence.

According to Dewey (as cited in Ozmon & Dewey, 2003), education should be an experimental enterprise and should promote the desire to find new answers to current economic, political, and social problems. Thus, the pragmatic man must learn to solve pressing problems intelligently rather than to rely mindlessly on traditions. This experimentalist tradition of problem-solving finds expression in Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, which, in itself, accentuates the Deweyan scientific method in which hypotheses are tested under laboratory conditions before they are accepted as units of knowledge.

Pragmatist education has a moral influence and should play a vital part in helping man promote growth, for others and for him/herself (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). This pragmatist inclination towards social efficiency is manifest in Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 whose education for *Unhu/Ubuntu* (humanness) targets moral development of both the individual and the society.

Dewey's Pragmatist Curriculum and Zimbabwe's Curriculum Structure

If reality is continually changing, as pragmatists fundamentally maintain, then a curriculum claiming to be based on permanent realities is foolish (Philos, Undated). The Deweyan curriculum should, thus, be flexible in order to deal with change in an intelligent manner. Likewise, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 commits to taking into account the forces of globalisation so that it keeps abreast with change. This, in itself, manifests the pragmatist dynamic conception of reality and flexibility of thought in addressing challenges vexing humankind.

"Pragmatists reject separating knowledge from experience and fragmenting or compartmentalising knowledge. When this happens, facts are torn away from experience" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 150). Thus, Dewey puts primacy on contextualised experiential learning. He also extols the integrated curriculum focused on thematic units, which Philos (n.d.) refers to as interdisciplinary education. Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 adopts the pragmatist principle of contextualised experiential learning through its principle of 'relevance', which views the curriculum as a tool for promoting competencies for life and work in a local context. The said Framework (GoZ, 2015) also adopts the pragmatist interdisciplinary education through its principle of "integration," which "fosters meaningful linkages among learning areas and subjects that the curriculum offers" (p. 15).

Deweyan pragmatism places emphasis on practical, scientific and social subjects because this philosophy values the selection of subject content according to the practical skills required by future society (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). According to Akinpelu (1981), natural sciences are much favoured in the Deweyan pragmatist curriculum. Therefore, as Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) demonstrates renewed interest in natural sciences as seen in its emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) subjects, it concurs with the pragmatist model of curriculum.

In the Deweyan pragmatist curriculum, natural sciences are followed by social sciences which are as important as representing the social environment and factors that affect human behaviour (Akinpelu, 1981). As Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 recognises the importance of social science subjects like Social Studies, Citizenship and Sociology, *inter alia* (which represent the social environment and promote civic competencies), it also manifests a pragmatist inclination.

In the same vein, the Deweyan pragmatist curriculum neither overlooks nor de-emphasises the Humanities as this learning area deals with cultural heritage (Akinpelu, 1981). Since Zimbabwe's

Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 regards favourably the Humanities (History; Family, Religion & Moral Education, & Heritage Studies), it certainly concurs with Deweyan pragmatism which equally puts primacy on cultural heritage.

Moreover, the Deweyan pragmatist curriculum values the teaching of languages as instruments of communication (Akinpelu, 1981). Hence, the fact that Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 puts primacy on Languages (Indigenous Literature, Foreign Language & Literature in English) demonstrates its compatibility with the pragmatist curriculum which equally values communication.

Deweyan pragmatism also deems it incumbent upon the curriculum to include aesthetic subjects (Arts, drama, literature & music) for the development of the child's creative abilities (Akinpelu, 1981). Therefore, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework's recognition of Visual and Performing Arts (Film, Theatre, Music, Sport & Mass Displays) as aesthetic subjects has a pragmatist inclination towards enhancing learner creativity.

Deweyan pragmatism overly holds that, in all cases, the subjects should be taught with a view to helping the child solve his problems, rather than as stored up information to be reproduced on demand (Akinpelu, 1981). Thus, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework's position that all subjects and learning areas should uphold problem-solving competencies owes quite a lot to Deweyan pragmatism.

It is also Dewey's well considered view that "traditional disciplines are not ignored but are used for knowledge background to accompany the problem and to aid student learning and growth" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 151). In accordance with this pragmatist standpoint, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 maintains the study of traditional subjects like Mathematics, History, Geography and Science, among others, as these remain instrumental in cultivating problem-solving competences and intellectual growth in learners.

Dewey's Pragmatist Pedagogics and Zimbabwe's Instructional Methodology

In tandem with the integrated approach to education, Dewey (as cited in Cohen, 1999) urges the curriculum to bring disciplines together to focus on solving problems in an interdisciplinary way. Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 incorporates this pragmatist cross-disciplinary approach through the principle of 'coherence' which refers to the clustering and sequencing of learning experiences to provide for holistic comprehensive learning and effective links between general academic and vocational education.

Dewey devastatingly attacks the discipline-centred and teacher-dominated traditional education (Akinpelu, 1981). He, thus, emphasises the child-centred approach to learning where the teacher does not control learners but acts as a guide (Cohen, 1999; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Therefore, the child is at the centre of all educational activities in a pragmatist class – an arrangement which considers “the present needs, interest and ability of the child” (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 151). Correspondingly, Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) stresses learner-centred approaches since the focus on learning revolves around learners as they engage in the search and discovery of new knowledge.

Deweyan pragmatism emphasises learning by activity or action-oriented education (Cohen, 1999). Thus, Dewey (as cited in Akinpelu, 1981) urges involvement of the child in the activity and practical application of the child’s theoretical knowledge as abstracted from problem-solving. Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 embraces this heuristic method of teaching-learning through the emphasis that it places on participatory and hands-on methodology.

Deweyan pedagogy treasures readings, lectures, presentations, field trips, videos, internet connections, dramatisations, role play which incorporates playway, and model-building (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to accommodate the above methodology, which is compatible with the highly cherished learner-centred approach. But the said Framework seems to have misgivings with the lecture method.

Pragmatists believe that real-life situations encourage the growth of problem-solving ability in a practical setting (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Hence, “the Deweyites stress problem-solving as the most effective method for directing change toward desired outcomes” (Philos, Undated, p. 398). Thus, each time a human experience is reconstructed to solve a problem, a new contribution is added to humanity’s fund of experience. Likewise, Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 exalts the problem-solving method elucidated earlier, which it also refers to as problem-based learning.

Pragmatists stress project methods (Patsanza, 1987), they accentuate the project-method as developed further by Kilpatrick (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Dewey in particular advocates collaborative learning projects (Philos, Undated; Cohen, 1999), which, in themselves, incorporate group work for social intelligence, social skills development and enhanced cooperative living. Consequently, Dewey (as cited in Akinpelu, 1981, p. 151) argues that “the group method or cooperative learning should be encouraged. The project method, in which problems to be tackled are set for groups, is the best method of encouraging group-learning.”

Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 adopts this pragmatist approach through inquiry-based or project-based learning, which “involves learners working for an extended period of time investigating and responding to complex questions, problems or challenges” (GoZ, 2015, p. 43). It should also be pointed out that the said Framework advocates this project-based learning method in conjunction with group work.

Dewey (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003), extols discovery learning which progresses from simple impulses to careful observation of the environment. This pragmatist doctrine of discovery is endorsed by Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) according to which “discovery learning involves problem-solving situations where learners tap from their past experiences and prior or existing knowledge to discover facts and new knowledge” (p. 42). This manifests the concentric model of teaching which progresses from the known to the unknown.

Deweyan pragmatism is against rote learning and it de-emphasizes textbooks in favour of varied learning resources, approaches and methods (Patsanza, 1987; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Correspondingly, Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 urges “the use of a wide range of methods adapted to the learner’s situation and needs in the context of interactive pedagogies” (GoZ, 2015, p. 44). The said Curriculum Framework, thus, detests subject-centred learning in favour of a child-centred approach.

Pragmatists believe that, rather than passing down organised bodies of knowledge to new learners, learners should be enabled to apply their knowledge to real-life situations through experimental inquiry (Cohen, 1999). This serves to prepare students for citizenship, daily living and future careers. Zimbabwe’s curriculum Framework 2015-2022 manifests this pragmatic-progressive Deweyan pedagogy through the principle of ‘relevance’ which exhorts education to be a tool for promoting competencies for life and work locally, and even globally.

Dewey’s Pragmatist Model of a Teacher and Teacher in Zimbabwe

According to Akinpelu (1981), Deweyan pragmatism strikes a middle path between the authoritarian teacher (advocated by idealists and realists) and a *laissez faire* teacher (advocated by romantic naturalists). Thus, the pragmatist teacher is “not the authoritarian and fearful figure as presented in the traditional education, but also not the dispensable element in the Rousseau’s type of child-centred education” (Akinpelu, 1981, p. 152). Hence, the pragmatist teacher is neither a figure of authority nor a disinterested spectator but a participant. Therefore, the pragmatist teacher should guide children’s learning activities, select the learning tasks, arrange them in a logical order according to the developing ability of the

child, pose as a resource person, arrange learning and moderate interaction among learners. This is endorsed by Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 which views the teacher as a facilitator, guide and resource person; an interested party and participant in the development of customised curricula and material; an interested party in progress and formative assessment; and able to participate in communities of practice (teamwork).

Children are motivated to learn naturally, and the pragmatist teacher should capture and use the motivation that already exists (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Pragmatist educators should, thus, find out the interests and motivations of children as well as the environment from which they come. Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015) incorporates this motivation ideal where it urges the teacher to ensure the content provides challenging tasks that keep the learner motivated and "make constructive comments in order to encourage learners to succeed" (p. 49). Ozmon and Craver (2003, p. 152) add, "Teachers must understand that all children are not at the same point, however, and cannot be educated in the same way. Although projects might motivate some students for group work, individual projects might have to be provided for others." Through Continuous Assessment Learning Activity [CALA], the pragmatist suggestion of individualised projects seems to find expression in Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

To Dewey, "a chief role of the teacher is to help learners identify problems, frame questions, and locate appropriate bodies of knowledge to better understand present issues and their histories" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 153). Thus, the teacher puts the pupil in the position of a problem-solver or discoverer or experimenter. This 'facilitator-guide' role of the teacher is further endorsed by (Patsanza, 1987) who argues that the pragmatist teacher basically helps the child to solve his/her problems himself. This is further substantiated by Philos (Undated) whose submission is that "pragmatist teachers are more concerned with the process of solving problems intelligently" (p. 400). Correspondingly, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 assigns the teacher to facilitate learning for learners and engage them in meaningful problem-solving activities.

The pragmatist model of a teacher calls for an exceptionally competent person – one who possesses breadth and depth of knowledge, understands current conditions that affect the lives of students, knows how to organise and direct student investigations, understands psychological development and learning theory, provides a supportive environment in which students can learn, and possesses a refined understanding of school and community resources that are available for teaching and learning (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 also demonstrates a pragmatist penchant as it cherishes a knowledgeable

teacher who is reckoned through possession of requisite qualifications. This is supported by Hapanyengwi (2011) who views "teaching as possessing a systematic body of knowledge" (p. 71). Thus, in conformity with the dictates of Deweyan pragmatism, Zimbabwe's system of education values a teacher who is suitably trained and qualified.

Pragmatist teachers "must see knowledge as indeterminate and open-ended, and their educational goals must constitute an ongoing inquiry that leads to action" (Philos, Undated). Thus, knowledge to pragmatist teachers is neither axiomatic nor perennialistic but research-based. GoZ (2015), thus, values a teacher who embraces the above-articulated pragmatist view of knowledge. It (GoZ, 2015) also exalts a teacher who is capable of ensuring inquiry-based and project-based learning which is designed to keep abreast with change. Above all, GoZ (2015) conceives the ideal teacher in pragmatist terms where it says "the teacher is interested and participates in the establishment of flexible plans of study in compliance with the school autonomy principle" (p. 44-45).

Dewey's Pragmatist School System juxtaposed with the Zimbabwean School System

Deweyan pragmatism maintains that the school must essentially be an extension of the home so that the experience of the child both at school and in the home can be related and continuous (Akinpelu, 1981). Nziramasanga (1999) endorses this standpoint as he exalts the close connection between the home and the school for the benefit of the learner. Likewise, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 urges the school system to respect individual learners and their communities (homes included) and to serve the society in accordance with the endogenous approach to education. Thus, the school should not be isolated from the community, nor should it alienate the learner.

Dewey (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 139) argues, "The school should be an institution where the individual and social capabilities of children can be nurtured. The way to achieve this is through democratic living." Thus, individuality and sociality are deemed interdependent and interrelated as they jointly engender freedom, development, humane optimism (envisioning the good of all) and inclusivity. The school should, thus, harmonise individuality and sociality, one supporting and enlarging the other (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe's school system commits to performing the above function through the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy about which Shutte (as cited in Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014) argues: "In *hunhu*, the community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up, it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life" (p. 7). *Unhu/Ubuntu*, with its democratic predisposition, thus, serves to harmonise individuality with sociality.

“Pragmatists such as Dewey see the school as a miniature community, a microcosm of the larger society” (Philos, n.d., p. 399). Hence, the pragmatist school is charged with the duty of simplifying, purifying, and balancing society’s cultural heritage. Thus, the school can reform society by equipping children with social intelligence (problem-solving ability), and by upholding the ideals of life in that society (Akinpelu, 1981). Likewise, Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 commits to dispensing a school system which inculcates problem-solving competences and African values in learners.

Pragmatist schools are multicultural and inclusive, hence they want all cultural groups to use the scientific method (Philos, Undated). Zimbabwe’s Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 implicitly manifests multiculturalism through the principle of ‘inclusivity’ – taking into account and addressing the different learners’ needs and abilities without disadvantaging any group or individual. The said Framework, thus, advocates cross-cultural application of the scientific method which it calls “problem-solving” as it “entails starting with an ill-defined and ill-structured problem” (p. 43).

The pragmatist school is a laboratory for experimentation (Philos, n.d.; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Hence, Dewey advocated schools to be liberating environments in which students were free to test all ideas, beliefs and values. However, this pragmatist notion of laboratory school seems to be at tangent with Zimbabwe’s less democratic school system whose curriculum is essentially top-down and top-heavy (centralised or core-periphery), learning experiences are decided upon from the central government, neither learners nor teachers have substantial input in curriculum development, the academic year is fully packed and hence learners are left with no time to experiment with ideas but to prepare for examinations.

The pragmatist school selects what to include in the curriculum according to the psychological, the sociological and the logical criteria (Akinpelu, 1981). Similarly, the Zimbabwean school system selects curriculum content for consumption by learners basing on psychological, sociological and philosophical considerations. Furthermore, pragmatists want the content offered in school to be mediated in a manner consistent with the concentric model of teaching-learning (starting from the known to the unknown) (Akinpelu, 1981). Compatibly, pedagogical discourse in Zimbabwe regards favourably the notion of teaching from the known to the unknown.

Critiquing Deweyan Pragmatism: The Debates

Charges of permissiveness were levelled against progressive theory and against Deweyan pragmatism too, because many progressives claimed Dewey as their philosophical leader (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). However, what these critics tend to oversee is the

fact that Dewey himself cautioned against the excesses of progressivism and stressed restricted freedom.

Having grossly been identified with progressivism, Dewey is also blamed for advocating a system of education which prepares its recipients to adjust to the prevailing conditions thereby maintaining the *status quo* (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Dewey’s idea, which got misconstrued, is that in order to reconstruct and re-orient society, people first have to adjust like any other organism, “but they do it for the purpose of strengthening some conditions and changing others – not simply to conform to *status quo* authority and power relations” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 155). Therefore, Deweyan pragmatism is endowed with a change agenda which its critics erroneously deny.

“Another criticism is that the pragmatist philosophy of education deprecates the acquisition of knowledge and waters down the curriculum by taking a piece of this and a bit of that discipline without ever fully exploring either in depth” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 154). But, this criticism could have been levelled by scholars who probably could have misinterpreted Deweyan ideas, and the author says so because Dewey did not mean that the intellectual and cognitive aspects of learning are unimportant. “He simply rejected the assertion that these are the most important things in education” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 154).

Pragmatism is indicted for over-emphasising the experimental approach to learning (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Dewey was again misinterpreted. What these critics fail to realise is that a premium on experimentalism does not mean that workable approaches, no matter how ancient in origin, are to be scrapped automatically. With pragmatist experimentalism, new ideas and approaches should simply be developed and implemented when they help solve perplexing human problems (Ozmon & Craver, 2003).

The project method, by its time-consuming nature, may not suit the time scope for completing school syllabi particularly in contemporary Zimbabwe. This project method and discovery through experimentation may require a great deal of equipment which may be unavailable in the majority of schools in Zimbabwe. However, in well-resourced, well-supplied and well-financed nations, this methodology is feasible, practicable and benevolent in the educative process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Criticism levelled in the foregoing does not suffice to nullify the conclusion that Deweyan pragmatism has made important contributions to educational theory and practice and will continue to do so. In actual fact, the outgoing reflection demonstrates

that Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is pragmatist as it manifests the following:

- a penchant to imparting knowledge and skills that work;
- a flexible, diversified, integrated and functional curriculum content;
- a learner-centred and heuristic methodology;
- a guide-facilitator and participant model of teacher; and
- a democratic, multicultural and inclusive school system.

Notwithstanding a few points of divergence between Deweyan pragmatism and Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework, the former is on the whole applicable to the latter. This harmonises with Wuta's (2020) observation that there is close propinquity between pragmatism and the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy which currently undergirds education in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the outgoing reflection has demonstrated that the agenda for marginalising Western philosophies like Deweyan pragmatism (agenda currently being pursued by the MoHTEISTD through UZ) is more emotive than rational. The article, thus, implores the MoHTEISTD and UZ to revisit their position with due sobriety so that they consider restoring Deweyan pragmatism to its rightful place within Zimbabwe's Educational Foundations (Philosophy) syllabus for teacher education. This reflection on the whole recommends the continued study of pragmatism 'in context', a predisposition which is in the best interests of the country's primary and secondary education sector.

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