

***Philosophy of Education: Its relevance to teacher education.* Oswell H. Chemhuru, published by Booklove Publishers, Zimbabwe (2011). Gweru, Zimbabwe: Booklove Publishers. 194 pp. ISBN 978 0 7974 4285 6.**

The thesis being defended in the present review of Chemhuru's *Philosophy of Education: Its relevance to teacher education* is that; on the whole this is a very good introductory text to a subject new students to the discipline usually consider difficult as well as irrelevant. Essentially, most students who are in colleges of education as well as universities in Africa do not quite acknowledge and appreciate the value of studying Philosophy. Furthermore, we consider the publication of this book as an inadvertent response to an apparent dearth of relevant literature on philosophy in general and philosophy of education in particular which is presented from an African perspective. We think the publication of this book was critical as most books in circulation in both African colleges and universities are mostly written from Eurocentric perspectives. Whilst we have no problems with such texts, however, we think they are not quite capable of speaking well to the experiences of the African students. On the basis that this book was written by an indigenous African for Africans studying philosophy, we find Chemhuru's book particularly important as well as appropriate. However, we think it is important to also mention that we have a few problems with the book, which we think had they been considered the book would have been even better. We shall address this in the form of a critique towards the end of the review.

Overall, this is a very good book which is presented as an introduction to philosophy of education as well as philosophy courses in general. Specifically, this fourteen chapter book can be very useful to both undergraduates, graduate and postgraduate students in universities as well as student teachers in colleges of education who are studying philosophy of education in particular as well as philosophy in general, for the first time. Thus, basing on the simplicity and user-friendly style adopted by Chemhuru in explaining critical philosophical terms and issues, he has managed to dispel the fear as well as explode the myth ordinarily held by most students studying philosophy for the first time, notably that philosophy is both a hard, convoluted and an irrelevant field of study. Consequent upon such baseless perceptions as well as misconceptions, students who find themselves studying philosophy for the first time, mostly take it as a compulsory option in some cases or as a last option in others. Accordingly, most of them are eager to quickly drop it and forget about it at the end of the course. Thus, those who find themselves in the 'unfortunate' circumstance of studying do so because it is a requirement and not because they appreciate its value. We therefore put it that; students after reading this book will find the study of philosophy in general and philosophy of education in particular quite worthwhile. Furthermore, they will begin to acknowledge and appreciate the value and relevance of philosophy not only to their education studies, but to all their studies as well as to their entire lives in general.

Turning to the fourteen chapters comprising the entire book, we find them short, captivating as well as logical. Thus, the book is presented in such a manner that the chapters build upon the former as well as pointing to the main thesis of the book, namely; to argue that; indeed, philosophy does have some value and relevance to the theory and practice of education. This is because Chemhuru uses relevant and appropriate examples as well as illustrations in his book. We found the examples and illustrations particularly relevant as they are found to speak very well to the experiences of the students. Also, each chapter starts with a brief introduction and ends with a brief conclusion, in which the main arguments of the chapter are reiterated in simple, user-friendly language as well as relevant illustrations. This is essential especially in order to capture the attention and interest of students studying the subject for the first time. Furthermore, we found the book adhering in most of the chapters to

addressing its main concern, notably; to demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to education in general and teacher education in particular. Accordingly, we found Chemhuru addressing this dimension quite well in almost all the fourteen chapters of the book.

Chapters 3-5 entitled; ‘The nature of logic’, ‘Fallacies: Mistakes in Reasoning’ and ‘Why study logic’ have been found to be very relevant to students. Thus, apart from improving their thinking as well as reasoning capacities in everyday life, these chapters are particularly relevant to students as they have implications for the manner they write and present assignments as well as projects. Essentially, from these chapters they will learn the need to be clear as well as logical in the presentation of their work, be it assignments, projects or dissertations. Furthermore, we find Chapters 6-10 particularly pertinent in this regard, as they attempted with relevant examples and illustrations, to demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to education in general but more specifically to the teacher. Chapter 11, entitled ‘What is a profession?’ is particularly important especially for prospective teachers, who happen to be the targeted audience of this book, as it seeks to justify the reason for choosing teaching as a profession among other professions. Such a justification is currently necessary, especially in view of certain perceptions which are placing the professional status of teaching into question. Conclusively, Chapter 14, the last chapter, ‘The value of philosophy to the teacher’ is particularly pertinent as it is in this chapter that the book concludes the main purpose and argument of the book, notably; to demonstrate the value or relevance of studying philosophy. We find this important because it means the author was operating within the parameters of the task he had set himself to investigate, which was, to demonstrate the relevance of philosophy to the teacher.

However, in spite of the preceding observations we have some remarks on the book which we think if they were considered could have enhanced the quality as well as the purpose for which this book was designed. Thus, as an introductory book to a completely new subject which the students are studying for the first time, it would have been prudent to have short re-call exercises or tasks at the end of each chapter. This is in order to enhance the students in remembering some of the key issues discussed in each chapter. Furthermore, whilst, Chemhuru did not mention that he is examining branches of philosophy, namely; epistemology, logic, axiology and metaphysics in Chapters 1&2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9&10 respectively, we think in essence that is what he was discussing, that is, branches of philosophy. We therefore put it that, as an introduction to the study of philosophy of education in particular and philosophy in general, it was prudent to mention this in his introductory or first chapter. This is in order to provide a sound basis for the subsequent chapters, which essentially were presented as examining the branches of philosophy.

Also, whilst we found Chapter 10, entitled; ‘Some Practical Ethical Problems’, very relevant and interesting as it had captivating illustrations, we think it would have been better had Chemhuru provided some brief discussion of the context of the ‘practical ethical problems’. Essentially, we argue that; there was need to interrogate the term ‘moral dilemma’. This observation is made against the understanding that, essentially ethical moral problems are best appreciated within the context of moral dilemmas or moral paralyses. To that end, we think the term moral dilemma or moral paralysis deserved some space as well as interrogation. Moreover, since the target audience of the book, is prospective teachers, we also think the hypothetical ethical problems or dilemmas identified for discussion, should have been drawn from educational settings and contexts, which would be involving for instance; teachers, learners as well as parents. Furthermore, we found Chemhuru’s “discussion of some of the standards we use in making moral decisions” (p. 60) problematic especially in the 21st Century. While we agree with him that in some cases people rely on

'intuition', 'tradition' as well as 'conscience' to make moral decisions, he should have gone further to mention some of the problems concomitant with operating on the basis of such moral grounds. Additionally, while we also agree with him that, utilitarianism can be considered as a sound basis for making moral decisions, rather than simply mentioning the two brands of utilitarianism, namely; rule and act utilitarianism in passing, we think he should have gone further to give a brief discussion of the two brands. Basically, we think rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism needed to be discussed to some length because they constitute a vital moral principle in ethical discourse.

Having said this, it is also considered prudent to mention that, this brief critique should not be construed as intended to discredit Chemhuru's book in any way. We put it that; we are confident this book will firstly; dispel traditional misconceptions and myths held that philosophy is esoteric and thus irrelevant. Secondly, this book is important because it has come at an opportune moment in Zimbabwe, when there are considerations to include philosophy into the schools' curriculum to be studied at high school. Thus, one of the factors militating against the implementation of this call has been the lack of relevant and appropriate texts. However, in view of the simple and user-friendly manner in which Chemhuru wrote this book, we think this book can be considered as one of the texts for the introduction as well as teaching of philosophy in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Lastly; this book will contribute immensely to the study as well as appreciation of the relevance of philosophy in general and philosophy of education in particular, to prospective teacher education students in colleges of education as well as universities.

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