

THE PHILOSOPHER IN THE MARKETPLACE: THE RELEVANCE OF LOGIC TO COMMERCIAL VIABILITY DEMANDS IN THE ACADEME

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Abstract

This work examined the relevance of philosophy to commercial viability concerns that play out in the academe. Logic is the tool of philosophy and philosophy is a humanities discipline. The humanities disciplines have come under a great deal of pressure and are wrongly regarded as pursuits that are incapable of addressing real life problems. In Nigeria for instance, with academic institutions being increasingly underfunded and a growing insistence on the commercial viability of research, it is clear that any research that cannot be converted into short term market-based applications are not regarded as useful. The humanities disciplines, of which philosophy is a part, appear to be at the receiving end of the growing skepticism about the value of university education. The path this work followed was to first elucidate the metaphor of the marketplace. Secondly the work looked into the nature of logic and acknowledged the service role it plays in philosophy. The final point which is the conclusion and recommendation of this paper was to state ways that logic and philosophy generally can equip the learner with useful skills that are still relevant, even if our educational concerns get narrowed down to market instrumentality. The skills this research focused on were those that can translate into cognitive, emotional and imaginative intelligence for the learner.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Education, Globalization, Humanities, Logic, Philosophy, Skill

Introduction

Before the turn of this Twenty first century, several factors had started to raise concerns about the relevance and utility of courses of study on the University curricula. Included among those factors were government's dwindling resources and the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, necessitating de-regulation and privatization of government establishments, and the demands of globalization. De-regulation and privatization had to do with governments putting their hands off provision of certain goods and services and opening the door for private sector participation in the provision goods and services previously reserved exclusively for governments. This opened up the job-markets. However, no sooner had these circumstances played out that it became clear that Universities and other higher institutions of learning were turning out

far more graduates than the job-markets could absorb. This ushered in what Pai Obanya (2012) calls 'the acceleration of history' which has brought some evolutionary imperatives on higher education as dictated by the peculiar requirements of life in the Twenty first century. Such peculiar requirements have to do with adaptability to accelerated changes, the predominance of ICT and socio-economic uncertainty. This has posed serious survival challenges for higher education. As Obanya has observed, to remain afloat in a world that the market has become the standard for allocating resources, institutions of higher learning have to:

- i) Transform from ivory towers to social laboratories.
- ii) Respond effectively to the demands of the world of work of a knowledge economy.
- iii) Compete forcefully with other competent structures for the generation and application of knowledge (Obanya 2012:12)

While 'ivory towers' are often pictured as giving over-specialized knowledge that may be disconnected from practical concerns of everyday life, those that graduate from her are required in the world of work to be down to earth, in tune with, and providing solutions in the practical concerns of everyday life. Thus while the model of an ivory tower is supposed to give knowledge for its own sake, there is a growing demand that higher institutions should serve as social laboratories that offer knowledge for the sake of utility and applicability to societal challenges. In a country like Nigeria where the prevalent societal challenge appears to be economic in nature, there is the widespread belief that to be useful, education should enable one to climb the economic ladder. These circumstances reveal that market forces and considerations have crept into the ivory towers and in the opinion of Michael Santos such market forces cannot be ignored (Santos 2020:7).

There is a widening gulf between the skill set that graduates of institutions of higher learning have and the requirements of the world of work. Such requirements place a strong premium on skills, required by a knowledge-based economy. Programmes of study offered by the Faculties of Arts or Humanities appear to come under greater pressure than other courses of study with respect to economic viability demands. Today's philosophy graduate does not find placement in a job easy at all. We could take a clue from those of them who came back from their National Youth Service. When asked about their primary assignment, the usual answer is that they are sent to teach 'government' or 'civics' in secondary schools because it is assumed that nothing relevant to philosophy is offered in secondary schools. This work responds to that assumption by arguing that the service role of logic is indispensable even if our model of knowledge is narrowed down to economic and instrumentalist considerations. Logic is important if the expectations of employers revolve around the cultivation of skills in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving and excellent communication. Before establishing this point it is necessary to have a shared understanding of circumstances that have variously been seen to imply that there is some crisis in the humanities.

Crisis in the Humanities and the Metaphor of the Marketplace

In a very recent report, Justin Weinberg (2023, para. 1) states that academic programmes in philosophy, theology and religion studies, history and so on at

Marymount University, Virginia in the United States of America would all be eliminated if a proposal from the administration is approved by the school's board of trustees. The reason for the proposed closing down of these academic programs is so that the university can focus on 'areas of growth'. The unhidden implication here is that the blacklisted humanities programmes are not considered to be 'areas of growth'. In our age, with the growing dominance of technology in the global economy, budgetary cutbacks have compelled academic institutions world-wide to prioritize what they see as 'useful subjects' for gainful employment upon graduation; and those 'useful subjects' do not include the humanities subjects but are generally restricted to the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects. This has created the impression, as Don A. Habibi reports, that the humanities are impractical and unimportant (Habibi, 2016:3). Paul Keen (2014:76) reports that:

In 2010, the government of England decided to cancel funding for the teaching of humanities programmes in English Universities, because those programmes did not satisfy the 'impact' criteria established by the new Research Excellence Framework; while in Canada in 2012, the federal government slashed seven million dollars (\$7m) off the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) funding; and in 2013, the University of Alberta announced that it had suspended admission into 20 humanities programmes.

These developments have raised a grave alarm as to the future of the humanities in the global North. There are indications that it may just be a matter of time before marketplace demands catch up with the teaching of humanities in the global South. It may be somewhat comforting to find that African scholars and researchers are not sitting by idly until the humanities are completely swallowed up by global, technological and market forces. Now, as philosophers, researchers and scholars, practitioners of the humanities at our levels, it is not as if we are untouched by and unaware of the mounting pressures on our disciplines – pressures to show our relevance and what we can contribute in concrete terms to our economy. The fact remains that regardless of how one looks at it, the need still remains to equip our graduates with marketable skills. Or else in the near future, our programs stand at the risk of becoming under-subscribed and underfunded; hence face extinction. As cited by Michael Santos (2020:6), research has demonstrated that University disciplines must do at least one of three things to draw the support of University administrators:

To be successful, a discipline must either (i) be devoted to the study of money; or (ii) be capable of attracting serious research money; or (iii) demonstrably promise that the graduates will make significant amounts of money. The University study of the Humanities is thought to score zero on each count. The fact that Humanities enrollments are declining merely shows that departments are failing in the vocational market place. Students are voting intelligently with their feet.

It is a fact that parents and sponsors of education want their children and wards to get employment after completing their education. This is a far more critical issue in a country like Nigeria, where the network of relations is far more essential than it is in other cultures. Parents who have devoted their lives and earnings to train their children rightly expect those children to contribute to their welfare once they are grown up. How can devotees of the humanities, philosophers and logicians convince such parents and their children that humanities disciplines like philosophy and its essential tool of logic are worthy of their attention? How can humanities disciplines prevent prospecting students from voting against humanities programmes 'with their feet'?

It is poor comfort, nevertheless a fact, that if the job markets are closing up, they are closing up for graduates from all disciplines, not only for those graduating from philosophy and the other humanities disciplines. We have known graduates with degrees in Law, Economics, Engineering, Business Administration and others who have gone round looking for jobs, and finding none. The same thing applies to many with degrees in Education. But it seems correct to say that no reasonable person would argue that since the job markets are closing for graduates, all University programs should close down except for those that can guarantee jobs immediately upon graduation. How can the humanities, philosophy and more specifically, the discipline of logic respond to the challenge of the un-employability of graduates of higher education? It is true that the world of work has been questioning the preparedness of institutions of higher learning to equip learners with employability skills that will make them suitably adapted to the demands of economically productive functions. Such demands have to do with effective communication, team work, problem-solving initiative, learning, adaptability and so on. It is the position of this work that these requirements can be cultivated and enhanced with the study of logic. The questions to be addressed now are: what is logic? ; what is philosophy? What is the relationship between the two?

The Nature of Philosophy and the Service-role of Logic

Philosophers see themselves as 'lovers of wisdom' because they explore fundamental questions about the world and human existence. In their search for wisdom, they are not content to rely on answers to their questions already provided by myths, superstitions, beliefs, popular opinions and religious as well as cultural traditions. Philosophers continue to ponder on the basic questions about the universe and humankind's place in it. Philosophers are aware of answers to their questions that have been provided by common sense and secular authority. But they are also aware that such answers can be partially or even entirely mistaken. This is why they seek answers based on reason and experience having at the back of their minds that every proposed answer to a philosophical question is tentative and subject to debate. This is why we find an array of schools of thought as proposed answers to any issue of philosophical interest. In fact as pointed out by some scholars, the value of philosophizing lies not so much in the theories it produces as in the very activity of seeking wisdom itself (Russell, 1979:161; Christensen, 1999: 1).

Philosophy is basically one of the core humanities disciplines that deal with reality, knowledge and values. The branch of philosophy that deals with reality is called metaphysics and philosophers working in that domain are confronted with timeless

questions like the problem of being; change and permanence; appearance and reality; the mind-body problem and many other problems that have led to several schools of thought, each attempting to address either the problem itself or a proposed solution to the problem. The branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge is called epistemology. Here the basic question revolves around the possibility, certainty, extent, justification and limitations of human knowledge. Again, and just like in metaphysics, we are here confronted with many schools of thought like skepticism, rationalism, empiricism, foundationalism, and coherentism to mention but a few. A learner may be alarmed at the fact that he or she needs to be exposed to so many schools of thought even when dealing with a very specific issue. The truth is that since philosophy is characterized by a break-away from superstitious, mythical and dogmatic explanations to phenomena, it encourages much diversity and the free exercise of human reason in tackling problems rather than enforcing a sort of conformity that closes the mind from speculation. The third branch of philosophy is axiology which deals with values. Here we have two sister disciplines of ethics and aesthetics. While aesthetics deals with what is beautiful and valuable in nature and works of art, ethics deals with what is good and valuable in human conduct. In ethics for instance, we are confronted with several schools of thought like hedonism, eudaimonism egoism, altruism, utilitarianism and so on, each interested in setting out the moral standard that we can use in appraising human conduct. This is why some also refer to ethics as moral philosophy, because it is interested in what makes and action right or wrong.

Philosophy is parasitic in nature. It looks carefully into the claims, methods, presuppositions, assumptions and conclusions of other disciplines. This quality is responsible for its conception as a second-order discipline. While every discipline in a college for instance is interested in transmitting a body of facts regarded as 'knowledge' to the learner, they take for granted and never ask the question of what knowledge is in the first place. Only epistemology, as a branch of philosophy is interested in the question of what human knowledge is. It is of primary importance to settle the question of what knowledge is before moving on to the question of how it can be transmitted. The issues and questions that the philosopher deals with are basic and foundational. For instance, every individual appears to have a certain conception of reality. If one was on his or her way to campus, and could read the inscription on a tricycle or lorry that says 'No condition is permanent' that inscription mirrors and is loaded with a certain conception of reality. Is there anything that is permanent in the world or are things constantly changing? If one attempts to give rational justifications for the view that things are permanent or that things are changing, then such a person is already in the domain of metaphysics. The natural scientist dealing with matter in his laboratory; the theologian talking about the existence of God, deities and spirits; even the physician trying to unravel the cause of the ill health of a patient; the laboratory attendant studying the reaction of microscopic forms of existence and so on, are all dealing with being, reality and existence, only that they never ponder on what being is and the nature of reality in the first place. This is why for Anyim and Ekefre (2023:1) "even individuals who have not had formal exposure to academic philosophy have also been concerned with philosophical issues". It can be safely stated that the core branches of philosophy are metaphysics, epistemology and axiology. What then is the place of logic?

It is safer to state that logic is the tool with which philosophy is done. In other words, logic plays an important service role in all branches of philosophy. An overview of the definitions that have been offered for logic will shed some light on its central concerns. For Patrick Hurley (2008:1) “logic can be defined as an organized body of knowledge or science that evaluates arguments”. A look at the definition offered above reveals that logic is concerned with 'arguments'. What 'argument' means in logic is different from the meaning it takes on in everyday communication. In its everyday usage, 'argument' can be used to describe a slight disagreement, a verbal fight, a heated dispute, a serious quarrel or an open confrontation. This is not what 'argument' means in the context of any logical investigation (Darty, 2019:78). When conceived technically as the rational exercise of giving reasons in support of a conclusion, it becomes clear that a greater part of human communications on a daily basis contain arguments (Esikot and Darty, 2023: 69).

Today with the extensive specialization within all areas of the academia, it is possible for individual philosophers to have trouble understanding the research of other philosophers even in their academic departments. However, in so far as philosophy is concerned with rational justification and argumentation, logic forms the cord that connects epistemology, metaphysics and axiology. Logic is presupposed in any philosophical discourse or better still, philosophers *use* logic. Because of this service role, logic is better seen as a tool in our best efforts to share meaning. It is because of the indispensability of logic as the tool of philosophy which in turn is a humanities discipline that makes Habibi (2016:3) to observe that “the fields of the humanities are the fertile grounds for developing critical thinking skills and becoming better decision makers”. Logic plays an important role in the cultivation of skills. The question is: how can these skills be useful in responding to the requirements of the marketplace?

How Logic can be made Useful in the Marketplace

It has been shown previously that 'market-place' considerations have become benchmarks for disciplines to enjoy the support of university administrators, governments, sponsors of education and even students themselves. Today, stake holders in education are recognizing the need to be deliberate and intentional about the cultivation of skill sets that are suitably adapted to social existence. Knowledge is not just sought for knowledge's sake. Seeking knowledge for its own sake is a luxury, especially in contexts where opportunities for economic survival and social existence are slim. With marketplace considerations coming to the fore, the image of institutions of learning as social laboratories is quickly replacing that of the ivory tower, where the philosopher could be stuck in speculative system building, insulated from the daily struggle for living. This problem of marketplace demands being brought on philosophy is not a recent problem. If we consider Socrates and the sophists as model educators, it would be realized that Socrates did not charge any fees from those he taught and was materially poor. The sophists on the other hand enjoyed good followership and their classes were not free so they were not poor (Darty, 2015:83). So even before the existence of the Bretton Woods institutions, there have always been pressures on philosophic knowledge to be useful for economic purposes. This raises the question of what roles logic or philosophy generally can play in the marketplace.

If prospecting students sign up for courses that can give them the guarantee of a meal ticket, it appears that it is only when the chain from production to consumption is complete and huge profits have been made, that other priorities can be met. Given this portrayal, learners who hope to be 'successful' have to carefully study facts and signals that indicate how benefits from their academic pursuits can be optimized. Learners who succeed must be flexible, adaptable and must respond effectively to economic events. There is the demand for the integration of university learning with life realities. These requirements are captured in such expressions as 'social sense skills', 'street sense', 'the world out there' 'the world of work' and so on. These expressions re-emphasize the point that the contemporary higher education should prepare the learner for interaction with the environment, including specifically the economic environment. It is through such an interaction that opportunities can be created that can address issues of employability and marketability. The 21st century world of work places great premium on personal qualities as opposed to qualifications. There is a tripartite set of skills that define the knowledgeable person that fits into the demands of the knowledge economy, namely hard skills that have to do with cognitive intelligence, soft skills that have to do with emotional intelligence and go-getting skills that have to do with imaginative intelligence. How does logic enhance each of these in the learner?

Cognitive science is the study of cognitive intelligence. In response to the question: what can logic contribute to cognitive science? Alistair Isaac and Jakub Szymanik (2010:279) have this to say:

In the early days of cognitive science, logic was taken to play both a descriptive and a normative role in theories of intelligent behavior. Descriptively, human beings were taken to be fundamentally logical, or rational. Normatively, logic was taken to define rational behavior and thus to provide a starting point for the artificial reproduction of intelligence. Both positions were soon challenged. As it turns out, however, logic continues to be at the forefront of conceptual tools in cognitive science. Rather than defeating the relevance of logic, the challenges posed by cognitive science have inspired logicians to enrich the repertoire of logical tools for analyzing reason, computation, and communication.

What this implies is that logic is indispensable for the cultivation of cognitive intelligence. This is why logic is considered to be an essential preliminary of higher education. The point is that logic is not an end in itself, but a means or instrument for getting the mind to acquire and retain knowledge in any branch of the humanities or sciences. Arthur Luce (1968:i) says of logic that, "it will help you to detect a bad argument and leave you with a mature, critical faculty and a standpoint of your own. Not only your thinking, but your speaking and writing should benefit. They should gain in clarity, precision and firmness". Hence logic is essential for the cultivation of hard skills that have to do with cognitive intelligence like self-expression skills, logical reasoning skills and computational skills.

If one only acquires cognitive intelligence or 'hard skills' without soft skills that have to do with emotional intelligence then such a learner is not one that is well-prepared

to participate in a knowledge economy. A book learned person should also be someone whose behavior meets social and ethical standards in a knowledge community. Present day requirements of work place a great premium on personal qualities, not only on qualifications. Before now, the 'logical' was often pitched against the 'emotional'. That is why Maria Roman and Vasile Roman (2017:275) observe that “in Ancient Greece it was thought that logic was superior to feelings because people could agree to rational arguments but they usually did not agree with feelings... The recently introduced concept of emotional intelligence (EI) offers a new way of looking at the debate – that people can reason on the emotions and that they can use emotions to help reasoning”. Nowadays, it can be safely stated that a person's ability to perceive, identify and manage emotions represents the basis for the quality of social relations and emotional competencies, which are important elements for the success the workplace. How logic enhances emotional intelligence is that in consistently identifying correct from incorrect reasoning and in sticking with the forms as a basis for validity one would have cultivated character formation skills, intrapersonal as well as interpersonal skills that are useful for understanding and 'teaming up' with others. As the tool of reasoning, logic plays a role in both to the ability to achieve correct reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge in order to improve thinking.

The next type of skill that is necessary in meeting marketplace demands have to do with go-getting skills that function with imaginative intelligence. At this stage, personal qualities are put into creative use for the benefit of the individual and the society. Creative thinking skills have to do with thinking out of the box, ideational fluency which has to do with the proclivity towards generating novel ideas and opportunity-perceiving and grabbing skills. Though creativity may be impulsive, and varied to learners, logic is still necessary to further enhance it. This is why Richard Paul (1993:19) states that:

All intellectual products in order to be intellectually assessed and validated require some logic, some order or coherence, some intellectual structure that makes sense and is rationally defensible. A product of intellectual work that makes no sense, that cannot be rationally analyzed or assessed and cannot be incorporated into other intellectual work or used, - and hence cannot play a role in any academic tradition or discipline - is unintelligible. Whether we are designing a new screw driver, figuring out how to deal with our children's misbehavior or working out a perspective on religion, we must order our meanings into a system of meanings that makes sense to us, and so in that respect, have a logic.

What this means is that logic plays a significant role in enhancing the skill of imaginative or creative intelligence. Obanya (2012:1) is of the opinion that courses of study become useful mainly when they serve as tools for transforming students along the tripartite lines of cognitive, emotional and imaginative intelligence. Logic has already been shown to be a tool more than any other traditional branch of philosophy. Its instrumental conception is self-evident. The traditional learning that encourages the storage and reproduction of facts, figures, theorems, principles and axioms in examinations without an attempt to

develop other perspectives of skills would always produce unemployable graduates who do not qualify as knowledge workers as required in a knowledge economy. A logic-based problem-solving approach is what prepares the learner and challenges him or her to be economically productive in order to fill the needs observable in the marketplace of his environment. Cognitive intelligence arms the learner with basic tools; emotional intelligence and ensures the optimal use of such tools in a social environment like a work place and even where there is no workplace, imaginative intelligence equips the learner to create one since it has to do with the novelty of perceiving economic opportunities in the 'marketplace'.

Martha Nussbaum (2010:2) has observed that radical changes are occurring in what societies teach the young, and these changes have not been well thought through. She notes that “the humanities and arts are being cut away, in virtually every nation of the world... seen by policy-makers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut always all useless things in order to stay competitive in the global market”. It must be admitted that this situation is a reaction to an old order which is the ivory tower model of education. The term 'ivory tower' is often used to describe a world where academics or intellectuals engage in knowledge generation through research and knowledge transmission through teaching in a manner that appears to be disconnected from the practical concerns of daily life. The idea of the 'ivory tower' as such, elicits some pejorative interpretation today because it tends to model a willful disconnect from the realities of daily life. It is seen to pursue researches that are over-specialized and academically elitist. This disconnect from the 'world out there' which is the marketplace is what widens the gulf between products of higher education and employability requirements. In response to this situation, this research has argued that the humanities disciplines should look inwards in order to see how to equip her devotees with the sort of skills required in a knowledge economy.

Conclusion

Even if educational policies are fashioned to pursue short-term profit by the cultivation of the useful and highly applied skills suited to profit-making, the humanities disciplines are very rich in terms of skills that are relevant to cognitive, emotional and imaginative intelligence. This research focused on logic as a tool can be optimally useful in this regard. As Richard Paul has stated “if we can continually help each student to become a more judicious critic of the nature and quality of his or her thought, we have done all we can do to make likely both the critical and creative development of each student” (1993:32). With the tool of logic being deployed in equipping the mind with hard, soft and go-getting skills, the philosopher can be suitably adapted to the demands and requirements of today's marketplace.

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