

Review Article

Implications of Ubuntu/Synergy for the Education System of Ethiopia

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In most sub-Saharan African states, education was carried out by missionaries, which resulted in the incursion of foreign language and/or culture. As one of the sub-Saharan countries, Ethiopia has faced the same scenario apart from the changes accrued during regime changes. In line with these changes, the education philosophy, education policy, and its accompanying epistemology have shown marked changes. However, all of them fail to encompass the sociocultural facets of the country. As a result, the quality of education at all levels of the system has been a point of discussion for the last several years. The current initiative (Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30)) is one of the offspring of a marked debate in the education sector. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide a more comprehensive picture of the education system in Ethiopia on top of philosophical scrutiny of past and current education reforms. In analyzing education reforms, the paper draws on indigenous philosophical orientation and the values of Ubuntu. The paper argues that the reforms introduced during regime changes are short of pledging an indigenous knowledge base. As indigenous education is based on sound philosophical foundations, the paper further argues that the proposed philosophical foundation can easily fit with the culture and lifestyle of the community being considered.

1. Introduction

Education is an important aspect that enables people to adapt to their environment. It is also taken as a keystone of development, social change, security, growth, and Power. But this could be realized only when it becomes relevant to the contemporary needs of the people to bring about social transformation and alleviate the political, social, and economic problems. Through education, one can be encouraged to think positively to own background, cultural heritage, identity, and personhood. This will be realized if the education system is founded on the three pillars of education, namely: learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together that transform the society to make a decision based on knowledge and to practically resolve life problems through the revitalization of every sector including the politics, the economy, the social, health, and others. Thus, education is a medium by which people are prepared for the

creation of their own particular civilization and glory for all citizens.

However, the type of education that is dreamed of should be different from the colonial education because the result of colonial education and/or missionaries is a loss of self-respect and standards, which ends with cultural conflict. Although Ethiopia is a country that was not colonized, the education system is criticized for being influenced by the western countries. For instance, all teachers and teaching materials were imported from western countries, mainly from the British [1], during the start of modern education in 1908. In this regard, the perspective of African world view and the associated indigenous knowledge is usually overlooked and dominated by the western culture which leads to identity crisis [2].

The practice since 1991 is using schools and colleges to serve only the interest and accomplishment of the goals of a single political party that has been in power. They use

educational institutions to propagate the ruling party's ideology and to achieve narrowly focused goals. That means the curricular materials and orientations are alien to students' perspectives and needs. This is almost a kind of practice in most African countries to respond to whichever ideological camp they adhere to [3], which is an indication of the influence of power relation from both internal and external agencies. Through such struggles, the traditional education and/or the Indigenous Knowledge, which was deep-rooted to the peoples' sociocultural milieu, had been ignored to take space in the education system. As a result, the quality of education from time to time is alarmingly declining and Ethiopians are deeply concerned about the current poor quality of education. Many factors, such as pedagogy [4] and poor preparation of teachers [5] [6], have been raised as the cause for this quality problem in education. We believe that the root problem behind all such hitches is the lack of clear and agreed educational philosophy in the country.

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the education system in Ethiopia and to come up with vibrant information of its philosophical foundation. In doing so, the article discusses the past and present ideologies that model the education system in Ethiopia and ultimately drew a lesson for future philosophical developments.

To support the arguments and counterarguments that arise, the article considered the experience of the authors, written documents dealing with the philosophy of education, indigenous knowledge, African philosophy (Ubuntu), and available government's documents.

The article is divided into three major sections. The first section presents the historical development of Ubuntu and its implication as to the philosophical bases of education and the second about modern education in Ethiopia, while the third section offers concluding remarks.

2. African Philosophy (Ubuntu)

Philosophy is the love and search of wisdom by logical means and moral self-discipline (dictionary definition). It encompasses features such as ethics, epistemology, and logic, which play an important role in deciding the aims of education, content, and learning experiences. The philosophical foundation of education, particularly philosophical substructures in the curriculum, is fully described by [1]. He pointed out basic questions such as: (1) What knowledge aspect may assist students in thinking critically for mental development? (2) How does learning lead to the development of inner potential? (3) Does the content relate one human being to another involving human development?

These questions are important when framing the education program at all levels. The core points behind the above questions are the incorporation of culturally based knowledge which is experiential or practical in nature. Not only this, the contents that students learn should be relevant to students' everyday life and be fitting to the values of the community in which they drew.

As the world view differs from community to community, the paper tried to focus on African/Ethiopian aspects providing a conceptual backdrop to the study. Therefore, what is African philosophy? Is there a philosophy that can be described as uniquely and distinctly to Africans?

In Africa, there are various philosophies, such as ethnophilosophy, sage philosophy, ideological philosophy, and professional or academic philosophy [7]. Ethnic philosophy consists of folkloric traditions, legends, stories, and myths and survives in both oral and written forms. While Sage philosophy refers to the spoken words and teachings of a few "wise men" or "sages." Nationalist ideological philosophy, on the other hand, includes the documented speeches of politicians and constitutes a political philosophy that also has a nationalist ideological character. Finally, academic philosophy deals with the writings and other contributions of professional philosophers and academics.

However, there is a debate between particularists (cultural relativists) and universalists. In essence, the particularists argue that philosophy is part of the culture (ethnic, sage, and ideological philosophers). On the other hand, universalists (academic philosophers) argue that consistency in thought and action, valid and sound argumentation, logic, and truth transcend beyond culture [7]. According to particularists' view, African philosophy is African before it is a philosophy, whereas universalists would maintain the opposite [8].

Above all, it is wise to view the philosophy of education to be both relativistic and particularistic to bring about social transformation, peace, and stability. Because African philosophy has its own merits, the West is not always the best. In this regard, we are not denigrating the universalist philosophy as it is also part of ourselves. Hence, incorporating important features of other cultures is also beneficial. Traditional African social interactions, tolerance, willingness to dialogue, moral maturity, compassion, interdependence, the priority of the community over individuality should be part of the African philosophy of education [9, 10].

However, are all these features unique to Africa or are they shared features among others elsewhere? Africans as people share many characteristic features with people of the world though they have unique elements. African philosophy combines all these considerations to reveal its strong conception of education. Therefore, the formation of a bridge between particularism of traditional ethnic philosophy and the universalism of African professional or academic philosophy to get benefits from both.

According to [11] and [12], there is a great potential in an African philosophy of education guided by communitarian and culture-dependent action drawn on a communitarian understanding of the notion of Ubuntu (African humanness and interdependence). This type of education that we intend to call education for Ubuntu is guided by a philosophy of education evolving from an African worldview.

Though African philosophy is in existence, it is only the Eurocentric philosophy that Africans learn in school. However, all thinking occurs in cultural and sociocultural contexts. Thus, our philosophy should be cherished and be maximized in our

school system. Like any effective system, indigenous education in Africa is based on sound philosophical foundations. These foundations or principles have been rightly identified by [13] as preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism, and holism.

The principle of preparationism implied that the role of learning and teaching was to equip boys and girls with the skills appropriate to their gender in preparation for their distinctive roles in society. Currently, this does not necessarily mean that there should be a boundary concerning gender roles in terms of profession. However, education should prepare citizens for their future careers by being contextual [14, 15]. Functionalism, on the other hand, implies becoming useful to oneself, one's family community, in order to learn how to adapt to their environment.

The third principle of African indigenous education was communalism. In African traditional education, all members of the society owned things in common and applied the communal spirit to life and work. Farmers are working together during plowing, harvesting, and road making for communal interest. Children belonged to the community, and every member of the community had a stake in their upbringing, expressed by an African proverb "it takes a whole village to raise a child" [9, 13, 14].

Perennialism constituted the fourth philosophical foundation of indigenous education in Africa. Most people in Africa consider education as a means for maintaining or preserving cultural heritage and learning as such is lifelong. As indigenous education is related to survival, it becomes the main asset and social capital that needs to be maintained. Indeed, education should incorporate the indigenous knowledge of the community to help living in harmony with other societies [9, 14].

The fifth philosophical foundation of indigenous education is holism or multiple learning to make students all rounded. The holistic nature of education will enable young people to acquire a variety of skills that made them productive in many ways. In addition, [15] added cosmopolitanism to this repertoire as a positive outcome for classroom transactions. Cosmopolitanism is a philosophical tenet that is evident in the classroom when coresponsibility for one another and valuing for each other's realities as part of everyday experiences in the classroom. When cosmopolitanism is enacted, teachers coteaching with students are in place, and connections between the teacher and students and students with each other are more of the norm than the exception like the modern social constructivism.

Moreover, the content or subject matter of indigenous educational systems is holistic. Because it is emanated from the physical, sociocultural, and spiritual situations of the African societies. The physical environments influence the content of the curriculum in that what was taught should assist the child in adjusting and adapting to the environment to exploit and derive benefit from it. On the other hand, what is happening in Ethiopia is the contrary; in that students living in mountainous areas are not learning what advantage does the environment have.

This shows Africans metaphysical beliefs, axiological values, and epistemological bases that formed the

foundation of indigenous education are depreciated as superstition by western educational philosophy. As a result, Western thinking dominates colonial education even in noncolonial countries like Ethiopia. This type of philosophy and the education grounded in it is alienated to the Ethiopian students as its worldview and culture are disparate from the life-world culture of the students and the community at large. According to [2], this situation will result in hostility and inauthentic existence which brings an identity crisis.

Hence, the remedy will be to return to the source and inculcate the indigenous philosophy. Relevance can also be obtained with the instigation of the indigenous African philosophy rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu, which is the basis of African metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology. This is because Ubuntu has the potential to rescue people from their loss of identity and let them regain their cultural and social values [14, 16]. Thus, the epistemological, axiological, and ontological underpinnings of the African education system should base their foundation on such indigenous philosophy that caters to the values and wisdom inherent in society.

It is also essential to combine features from indigenous African cultures with conceptual tools from the West. This includes considering the benefits of western culture and accustoming to the particular traditional thoughts and practices derived from the local community. Practical philosophical and educational priorities will emanate from everyday life experiences and the local culture. Hence, as the life experiences of Africans are different from those of others elsewhere in the world, the practical, philosophical, and educational priorities will also differ. A good example of such adaptation is Japan. They preferred adaptation and adjustment of European colonialism, which makes them have better progress [17].

Conversely, the Ethiopian education system is conquered by the western ideologies, which reflect values that are different from those that are indigenous to the people. Because of this, the curriculum planning, implementation, and its outcomes remain eccentric. This situation, on the other hand, has ultimately created a point of discourse in the country. Hence, we aimed to overview the educational philosophy of Ethiopia by benchmarking the African/Ethiopian philosophical orientation (Ubuntu/Synergy).

3. Educational Developments in Ethiopia

Traditional Ethiopian education which has been the basis for the production, formation, and preservation of tradition, culture, and values of the Ethiopian people has been replaced by modern Education which is literally called "Western Education" in Ethiopia since it has no any taste of the Ethiopian culture and worldview. The essence of "Foucault's Genealogy" will help us to show how such traditional worldviews have been denigrated and are made obsolete through the systematic organization of the Education system. Foucault's concept of power relation represents the power dynamics that the actors, both internal and external bodies, play in the field contributing to the asymmetrical

knowledge expansion of one group. The external forces include organizations such as the World Bank and IMF as donors that influence the policy and the philosophy including the content and structure of the education system of developing countries, including Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries in the World, with about 3000-years of history as a nation-state [18]. Ethiopia had its own traditional system of education before the introduction of the so-called modern education in 1908. It was the Church education to serve as the custodian of the country's culture. The Church provided education to Ethiopians equivalent to modern elementary to university level education since it is founded in 330 A.D. [19]. The higher level education system (monastic university) was devoted to teaching subjects such as theology, philosophy, computation, history, poetry, and music. Many such schools function to this day, thus forming one of the oldest continuous systems of education in the world [19]. This traditional Church education system made Ethiopia to have the only ancient written scripts in sub-Saharan Africa and well-developed numerals system of its own.

The first level is called "*Fidel Bet*" where children learn the Ethiopic alphabet, reading and writing, simple arithmetic, and discipline (respecting the elders) followed by the second level called the "*Zema bet*"-school of hymn, where students of this school learn the hymnody of St. Yared, a well-known Ethiopian scholar of music [3].

The third level is the "*Qene bet*"-school of poetry which focuses on Church music, the composition of poetry, theology, history, painting, metallurgy (mainly to make Cross of different versions from Gold, Silver, and other ores, for inscription and other purposes) and manuscript writing [3]. It also adds the teaching of philosophy, the main text being "*Metsafe-Falasfa*"-Book of Wise Philosophers, which is a translated version of Ethiopian philosophy. The next higher level is the "*Metsahaf bet*"-(school of text/books), where students learn an in-depth study and analysis of the sacred and philosophy books. In this stage, other subjects like world history and Ethiopian history are also given. A student who has gone through all the four stages of education successfully will be called a "*Liq*" like being a professor. Graduates of this system of education are characterized by their dedication to give services to their country and to their Church. It was these people who were even serving their country in different Ministerial and other offices during the period of Menelik-II and Haliselasie-I (His Imperial Majesty) and as a chronicle writer in the former kings during Medieval Ethiopia [19].

This traditional system of education and the IK such as traditional medicine and agriculture of the people generated through old centuries of trial and error experimentation has contributed in many ways to the social and cultural transformation of the country. It has made tremendous contributions towards enabling the country to be the master of its own destiny in the field of medicine, agriculture, architecture, and literature (written language). However, the so-called modern education in Ethiopia has undergone many changes mainly based on the ruling party of that time.

The education system of each subsequent regimes has been changed based on their ideology. The following paragraphs discuss the internal factors in terms of the ruling party's ideology. As [20] assertions confirm "no education is ever neutral." Education has the power to maintain the status quo or to transform society depending on the agenda that is set for it. If no education is ever neutral, it means education always serves a purpose because it is always based on some philosophic base whether or not we are aware of it. It is either conservative, maintaining the status quo, or transformative.

In the past, educational philosophies were supposedly imposed by the ideology of the ruling system, which resulted in inconsistent orientation, policy, and curriculum. The education system during the Haileilassie I regime was based on preparationism, which is devoted to preparing boys and girls for specific gender roles. It was designed to meet the objective of the Feudal era. Hence, it is discriminatory creating a border in gender roles between males and females. However, to the end of this era, the government tried to design both the political, economic, and educational policies in line with the West, America, and Britain [19].

However, in the communist military junta (1974–1991), the educational philosophy was guided by Marxist Leninist Philosophy. In this period, the policies and strategies including the guiding philosophy were derived from the Soviet Union and other Eastern countries. The philosophy was based on Marxism–Leninism and there was a wave of advocacy for the teaching of Marxist Leninist philosophy and Political Economy. Indeed, at that period, Political Economy was also being taught as a subject in Ethiopian secondary schools. It was deliberate and planned to inculcate the influence of socialism in the economic sector conveyed through education. Hence, during this era, political ideology was what guides education and other sectors like the economy.

The same is true during EPRDF (Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front); the educational philosophy was dominated by the Revolutionary Democracy [21]. Though it is not explicitly mentioned, it has a philosophy rooted in Leninism, Marxism, Maoism, and also liberalism, which follows an eclectic approach with no clear direction to guide the economic, educational, and social organization of the people. Thus, education was used as propaganda to keep the status quo but not as a tool to transform society. This can be seen clearly in the Amharic document published in June, 1993 which was circulated to its members. As it is revealed in the document, the view of schooling or education is described as follows.

In the wealthy countries of the West, schools are not openly regarded as propaganda tools. In practice, however, they are indirectly used as sophisticated propaganda tools. We can also do the same thing in our country too. In the name of introducing the country's constitution, we can inculcate the basic goals of our revolutionary democratic system. As it is not openly presented as propaganda, it will effectively serve the purpose [21].

This kind of arresting the education system through such an unfounded structure is what eradicates the education

system of Ethiopia for the last 29 years. During this time, the quality of education was declined to the extent that graduates cannot express themselves and they were not liable to accomplish their jobs successfully. It is also a recent jolting issue that undergraduate students could not read and write properly in English language [22], which is the medium of instruction. Though there are many possible causes for this, one reason might be the reliance of the education system on western values and theories.

Not only this, Ethiopia has encountered many conflicts based on ethnicity mainly because of an ill-structured system. It clearly indicates the heavy influence of revolutionary democracy on state functions including the education system being indirect and enacted through the behaviors and actions of the EPRDF leaders from top to down.

This does show a lack of adaptation of authentic educational philosophy to provide a foundation for the education system in Ethiopia. It is believed that without a philosophic base, there is no direction, no authentic value to propagate [23]. Makuvaza further contends that, in an attempt to emancipate the Africans, the point of departure is on view points and education.

As a way of existence, the African worldview supports collectivism, communalism, and interdependence rather than individualism. The philosophy of education should also be wended up in such a manner.

The notion of collectivism and communalism is different from the individualism concept. In line with this, Van Eck [24] argues that western civilization has been built on the premise that the world is made up of individual discreet units. This Western mindset is expressed in Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," which is the clearest expression of the basis of Western individualism emphasizing individualism over the community. This actually was contrary to African/Ethiopian philosophy which stressed the essential unity of self and other. Not only this, Western science knowledge expresses objectivism (single reality), while indigenous knowledge of Africa expresses a wisdom tradition of thinking, living, and being (holistic, multiple reality) [25].

The ideological foundation of the ruling party is what leads the education system serving as a worldview by neglecting the ethnic and the sage philosophy on which the people largely depend.

Though there are contentions between these two extremes, the paper positioned the common ground. First, it is important for students to develop scientific knowledge and maintain their own worldview and culture to adapt to their environment through the integration of the indigenous knowledge that they practice in their daily life. Second, the philosophy should clearly show the type of citizen that the education system should produce to promote a successful nation through science and technology.

Let us come to the concept of Ubuntu, which is a "Nguni" term for common or shared humanity [26], or humanness to reflect something for both social and environmental integrity. Desmond Tutu explains more clearly about Ubuntu by saying:

A person is a person through other persons. None of us came into the world fully formed. We would not know how

to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings so that we need other human beings in order to be human [26].

On the other hand, based on the collective African way of life, [27] has extracted five key social values of Ubuntu by creating the collective five finger's theory. The principle behind this theory can best be explained by the African proverb "a thumb, although it is strong, cannot kill aphids on its own." Meaning it would require the collective co-operation of the other fingers. According to these authors, the concept in this proverb is two-fold. Firstly, the fingers can be seen as individual persons who act together in a collective manner to achieve a certain goal. Secondly, the fingers represent key values that are necessary to form and maintain a collective culture.

The five key values according to [27] are survival, solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity. These values have always been part and parcel of the African culture [27, 28] which is also true in Ethiopians. Particularly, in the Ethiopian context, these values are the attributes of Synergy. The Ethiopian people so long learned how to survive through "brotherly" care which is a dominant attribute than individual self-reliance. Very closely related to survival is a spirit of solidarity that is developed through the combined efforts of individuals in the service of their community. Mbjigi [27] further confirms that from early childhood, Africans are socialized to understand interdependence.

The idea of the 'self' becomes established in the community. In fact, in Ubuntu, the community does not neglect the individual, nor is it simply swallowed up. In Africa, personhood is not merely described in terms of individuality, instead, it is defined with reference to the community [29].

Compassion is another key social value of Ubuntu [29]. It is taken to be a human quality of understanding the predicaments of others and wanting to help them. In the African milieu, however, compassion is reaching out to others and practicing humanism so that relationships and friendships can be formed [30]. The underlying belief amongst Africans and/or Ethiopians is that all human beings are interconnected and share a common responsibility for each other.

From an early age, Africans learn that they are interconnected with each other and that sharing and giving become sources of happiness. This is why most Ethiopians are willing to help members within and out of their community. It is only through such community solidarity that hunger, isolation, deprivation, poverty, and any emerging challenges can be handled.

The idea of Ubuntu differs from the materialist/objectivist view of the world and reality, which was the dominant worldview in the Western scientific culture, because the worldview in Africa is relational unlike the West which is objective. However, the notion of Ubuntu has a universalistic approach, meaning it shares some of its values with other communities outside of Africa. Generally, Africans life before colonization emphasizes humanity and relationships over individuality. However, it is eroded and Africans adopt individualism over communal ways of life [16].

An intellectual tradition emphasizes individual cognition exemplified by Descartes' famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am." On the other hand, a wisdom tradition embedded in Ubuntu emphasizes group-oriented ways of being, embodied by "We are, therefore I am," and practiced by living in harmony with other people and nature. Murithi [31] argues that Ubuntu is an African way of viewing the world which is at odds with the western ideas that are geared to individuality and competition.

Indigenous knowledge combines the ontology of monism and spirituality with the epistemology of place-based, holistic, relational, and empirical practices in order to practice harmony with nature for survival [25]. Thus, it is vital to inculcate indigenous knowledge. The first step will be to recognize schools as a community, not as a collection of individuals where all stakeholders such as teachers, learners, school leaders, parents, government body, and the community coparticipate in shaping and implementing learning programs.

Ubuntu as a philosophy entails that people should look at whether what they are doing will empower the community around them irrespective of ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. It also implies that if people are treated well, they are likely to perform better. Hence, respect is a binding phenomenon for the peaceful existence of people together regardless of their differences [11]. Respect and love amongst the community members and to other communities play an important role in an African framework. As [29] discloses, Ubuntu/Synergy can be the philosophical basis of the education system because it expresses the interconnectedness, common humanity, and the concern of individuals to each other.

Ubuntu acknowledges both rights and responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal wellbeing. For example, [32] revealed that Ubuntu's importance as a value system is seen in the way that it has been the backbone of many African societies and the fountain from which many actions and attitudes flow. He took it as a statement of being that encapsulates the fundamental elements that qualify any person to be human. In this regard, Ubuntu is a spirit of caring, harmony and hospitality, respect, and responsiveness that individuals display to one another [33]. There is a general agreement among writers on Ubuntu that it represents an alternative voice as it is not grounded in the dominant Cartesian duality which emphasizes on separation instead of unity.

The Ubuntu version of the Ethiopian philosophy that the paper proposes for education is Synergy. Synergy is a philosophy which denotes togetherness in every aspect of human life to increase solidarity, equality, and equity, keen relationships among the various sectors of the society, nature, and spiritual realm. As an ideology, it is currently advocated to guide the political, social, and economic integrity of the people in Ethiopia.

Through the book entitled with Synergy written by the prime minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel peace prize winner, promotes his philosophical view to add a new light on the opening of a new era which can stimulate the economic, social and political development of the

country. This is a clear indication of the fall of the revolutionary democratic system in Ethiopia. Particularly, in the introductory part of the book, he discloses the importance of domestic solutions to local problems instead of expecting all solutions from abroad [34], because, to ensure sustainable development in every sector, it is better to draw the solution for any problem from the inside by addressing the people's culture, values, living styles, and ways of thinking. However, he also accepts the possibility of bringing conceptual tools from both the West and the East and gear in accordance with the internal context to alleviate the political, social, and economic problems. Hence, to meet these objectives, the people of Ethiopia have to understand the fundamental existing problems and work together for their solution in collaboration with one another.

In the context of Synergy, it needs to establish a foundation upon which the different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups of the society can see their future as glorious as possible in every aspect of their existence by ensuring collaboration, interdependence, reciprocity, standing for others through enhancing hospitality. These all are the values of Ubuntu.

The book further explains that the country and the people cannot stand on two feet unless they remain united for their future victory. However, the Prime Minister describes that maintaining unity does not necessarily mean to be one and the same; rather, it represents unity with diversity. He continues to reveal that the country is currently found on the brink of separation and the peoples are on the verge of division and this separation and division will bring nothing but weakness and damage unless Ethiopians as people maintain their former values which can help them live together. Ethiopians as people were having several social values established through cooperation and collaborative patterns of living which are eroded from time to time due to many interrelated factors coming from both the internal and external environment.

Among the external factors, globalization and modern education founded on Western philosophy are worth mentioning. Among the internal factors, the reduction of social ties through the erosion of different informal social institutes is getting a greater concern. In Ethiopia, there are several informal social institutions that enhance socialization and strengthen the social fabrics of the people irrespective of their ethnic and religious differences.

Such traditions like "eder" (Eder is an informal social institution where people cooperate in case of emergency situations like death and marriage.) and "equb" (Equb is also another informal socialization scheme that will involve at least four people. It is a mechanism of collecting a certain amount of money from each member and give to one of the members every month or week. All people in the group will get the chance and it will face out when all members get their share.) are organized for social and economic purposes and these institutes increase the social ties and economic integrity of the people living in specific areas. Besides, Ethiopians have many cultural and social values which can enhance the people's harmony, sharing, reciprocity, keen relationship, and cooperation.

The people of Ethiopia were hospitable to the extent that long journey travelers in the past were received as guests but not as strangers by households and the host will receive the guest(s) in a very gracious manner by washing his/her feet, serving food, and letting the guest sleep on his bed. These were unique heritages experienced by almost all Ethiopians. Respect and dignity are considered important values in most societies and cultures of Ethiopia. In the African culture, it is even considered as one of its building blocks [35]. From childhood, Ethiopians learn to give respect to those in authority, the elders, and other members of the community. Respect is one of the values of all Ethiopians. For instance, Ethiopians give plural names for elders. Such values are also common among other African countries guided by their worldview (Ubuntu).

Values like visiting sick people who are not necessarily one's own relatives, sending condolences to a family who lost their relatives, adopting an orphan or a child of the poor as one's own child called "Gudifecha," providing food for needy people in the community, assisting the elderly in many ways, and greeting others in a loving, friendly, and compassionate way are common values among the Ethiopian people. Moreover, the spirit of Ubuntu as Synergy leads to cooperative and collaborative work environments, because the community is encouraged to participate, share, and support all the individual members [36]. Ethiopians are known for such collaborative works during agricultural activities like plowing, weeding, collecting, and storing crops in groups. When a need arises to help someone whose harvest is more than his capacity to collect or become sick or orphans or widows, the surrounding community has the courage to help by coming together.

Furthermore, Ethiopians are known to fast the fasting of other religious groups, for example, Christians, fast Muslims fasting, and vice versa to express their solidarity. Likewise, Community-based approaches also help build synergies where the whole is better than the sum of individuals. Under the philosophical view of Ubuntu, synergies are realized where the groupings are socially or culturally bound [33, 37]. In an Ethiopian setting, an ox/cow is shared amongst the community members as a common practice during ceremonies. Ethiopians call it "Kercha."

Social responsibilities can also be expressed in terms of harvesting only part of the crop from the field (literally means "Karmia"), leaving the rest to the less privileged, the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the orphans and eventually to the birds. Regrettably, all these values are eroded and are found on the verge of extinction through adopting foreign cultural values disseminated through modern education presented as Universalist approaches which tend to assimilate the young generation towards Western cultures. As a result, the eroding of one's culture and its associated values which help people to live in harmony invite other attributes of globalization such as self-interest, individuality, competition, and emphasis on individual development over social development with its associated social ills [38]. Globalization will also push people to change their life styles and the relationships they have. Particularly, it forces Africans to open their market together with their cultural values to

foreign influences due to asymmetrical cultural expansions despite its contribution.

In the African context, it has threatened the notion of Ubuntu/Synergy as a unifying philosophy emanated from the culture, spirituality, and religions which embody all those virtues that emphasize the maintenance of harmony and the spirit of sharing among the members of society. However, the indigenous values by themselves can be updated and grow to the extent of fitting with the contemporary challenges. According to [38], Ubuntu emphasizes on the moral obligation of the individual to acknowledge and respect other human beings in view of the inescapable interdependence among humankind. However, imperialism invites globalization that systematically abolished the ideals of shared prosperity and the common good and has broken the family unit which is a critical value of Ubuntu.

In an educational context, togetherness and social integrity endorsed by the values of Synergy/Ubuntu can be applied in the classroom, where students are engaged in group discussion, cooperative or collaborative activities to enhance meaningful learning. Synergy/Ubuntu encompasses certain components commonly seen in the Ethiopians social and cultural manifests. Therefore, it can easily be adapted to the education systems of the country to create strong bonds among the people and reduce generation gaps created between the youth and the elders.

Since education plays an essential role in promoting socialization, peace, integrity, equality, harmony, and interdependence, it is important to craft its philosophy, policy, and methodology to address the stated objectives. These all values are indicators of Synergy which is also the current principle guiding the political program of the government of Ethiopia. If these all manifestations of the principle of Synergy are practiced in the education system of the country, better outcomes could be achieved in all sectors. However, this may not mean that it is the sole solution to the current problems of quality education in the country. There are many pitfalls in the education sector which are not the scope of this paper.

Another corner is about moral and spiritual values. In this regard, African people have a social and humanistic basis. Therefore, inculcating a sense of spiritual and cultural values at schools might help young people achieve higher levels of moral judgment. The belief is that education does not exist simply to serve the market but to serve society.

Research shows that overreliance on Western education created a distorted value system in Africa [39, 40]. Particularly, [40] stated the following to mention the risk of quality matters in the Ethiopian education system, "modernization through westernization is a project doomed to failure and it results in loss of identity." Thus, the education system should integrate important characteristics of both the modern and traditional ones to make a holistic approach to the whole system. Before the introduction of Western civilization into Africa, education in the continent was purely indigenous. The Western culture is brought by modern education which rejects the kind of indigenous education which is holistic, lifelong, and anthropomorphic.

However, having seen the significance of indigenous education, there is currently a call in most African countries including Ethiopia for a recuperation of the indigenous values. It is therefore wise to rethink the education system by grounding on indigenous philosophy like Synergy/Ubuntu. In doing so, we are not in a position of totally rejecting western conceptions, but it is equally important to be holistic in selecting values that do not confront the indigenous culture and values.

As the method of indigenous education is concerned, both theoretical and practical approaches should be employed in teaching learning. Children will be trained in skills that made them become productive and useful to themselves and to society in such a way that they learn how to learn. Through such education, young people will acquire a communal rather than an individualistic outlook. Thus, the future education system, unlike the former, should promote group work, cooperative learning, collaborative learning to reduce individualism, and competition in a real practical sense.

However, a balance should be maintained between the practice of indigenous and modern education to produce a well-rounded citizen. In other words, as Adeyemi and Adeyinka [41] contend, the papers suggest a blending of the good values of African indigenous education with the good aspects of the formal education of the Western type.

In describing the notion of Ubuntu in education, [42] argues practicing Ubuntu as the one that demands students to articulate their willingness to engage with one another in an atmosphere of openness without discrediting other's point of view. In this regard, there is a general lack of moral integrity and focus among the public in Ethiopia which is exhibited by high levels of intolerance of diverse views. The consequence has been political turmoil and socioeconomic meltdown. However, if the core values of Ubuntu such as humanness, caring, sharing, respect, and compassion are applied, it will develop the humane character of the students. This intern leads to becoming better leaders of tomorrow in this fast globalized world.

Education is then like a river having many tributaries continually enriched by innumerable ideas, perspectives, and practices along its journey. However, unlike a real river in one community, this is a river that flows across the nation and nationality and across generations encompassing the breadth and depth of civilizations, cultures, and the unity of the country at large. The river should also be enriched to promote a dialogue among civilizations founded on indigenous knowledge and interfaith dialogue that seeks to enhance understanding, respect, and harmony among all faiths and religious views. Hence, the river of educational transformation considered education for a culture of peace. This includes understanding the root causes and overcoming problems of local injustices, human right violations, ethnic discrimination, ecological destruction, and all other manifestations of violence and conflict.

Education, through supporting a struggle to promote justice, nonviolent transformation, sustainability, intercultural respect, human rights, and democracy has provided much energy and Synergy for local and global

transformation [41]. Education as a foundation for enabling people to live in an environment of peace and security is fundamental to human dignity and development. Too often, fragile processes of sustainable development dreamed as a nation are undermined by insecurity and conflicts. These resulted in a significant loss of life in a tragic manner, overwhelming health systems, destroying buildings, schools, factories, and, often, destruction of whole communities leading to an increasing number of internally displaced people.

Mostly, conflicts in Ethiopia involving communities and peoples of different cultures and traditions are not usually caused by ethnic and religious differences, but by the complexity of problems emanated from political and economic causes such as competition for resources or territories, struggles for justice, and self-determination. Here, the continuing cycle of conflicts, violence, and counterviolence among ethnic groups initiated by political affiliates remains a monumental problem confronting humanity in Ethiopia. The killing of numerous people and substantial destruction resulted after the assassination of a famous Ethiopian singer (Hachalu Hundessa) on 29/06/2020 is the most recent tragedy that occurred in Ethiopia.

Though such a crisis has many causes, one of them is indeed the problems in the education system which fails to equip the young generations with moral and ethical values. Therefore, educational programs in Ethiopia need to address such problems and be drawn from the values and wisdom of diverse faiths and cultures to nurture the moral, spiritual, and ethical commitment of human beings to live in a hospitable way and relate with each other. According to Toh et al. [43], this situation has the potential to enhance ecological integrity and sustainable futures.

Although the education system has a modern genealogy, it is vital to recognize and search for their roots in the ancient wisdom of the people, especially through the values and principles of wellbeing, dignity, and good relationships within the communities. Along the river of educational transformation, significant contributions have also been made by the tributaries identified by such values as harmony, reciprocity, interdependence, collaboration, and humanity, all of which are elements of Synergy or Ubuntu.

While the connectedness of all human beings beyond such differences as race, ethnicity, gender, or religion is central to the application of Ubuntu/Synergy, in practice, it also acknowledges the importance of their individuality and independent identity. This helps to respect both individual and group interests with no discrimination of the individual from the collective group because groups are aggregates of individuals. The following literal maxims of Ethiopians can describe the idea better: literally meaning- "when the eye is hit, the nose will weep" or "a tree cannot make a forest," or "one hand cannot clamp." This situation can also be further comprehended in greetings made in Ethiopia. Elders greet someone by asking about the wellbeing of the whole family, village, cattle, and crops because of their relatedness to nature. This shows people are concerned about the whole instead of saying Hi to the individual because "a person is a person through other persons" [27]. Therefore, this is good

evidence showing an embedded value in the community experiencing a unique world view.

On the other hand, Synergy/Ubuntu can be taken as a concept that has particular resonance with those concerned about building civil society, enhancing community relations, and promoting social cohesion. Particularly, it is about building a network of delicate relationships of interdependence [44]. These are networks that are marked by affirmation and acceptance of others. Such relationships and networks are voluntarily accepted and practiced as it can be seen most commonly in different societies who are linked with strong bonds such as marriage and religion. It also includes common values developed as a result of living together; informal social institutes like “equb” and “eder” are particularly well known in Ethiopia.

Therefore, Synergy plays an important role in serving the needs of the communities. On the other hand, violating these bonds will result in conflict, mass killing, migration, and total devastation with no gain on either group as [45] notes anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even aggressive competitiveness are corrosive and threaten social harmony.

4. Concluding Remarks

Currently, the Ethiopian educational system is criticized for quality, particularly alarming at the primary level, which is the base for successive school years. Though not everything can be planned to control future events, it is essential to learn from past lessons and plan for all conceivable scenarios that may happen in the future. It has to be made clear from the outset that this large and important task cannot be managed by the education sector alone.

As it is discussed above, the values and attributes inherent in Ubuntu/Synergy can play a valuable role in both helping individuals in a range of community developments and nation building initiatives. Thus, under this worldview, the youth in Ethiopia have to stand together from every corner of the country, to respect, to love, and to help each other so that there is no mountain which cannot be pushed, any river which cannot be dammed, a problem which cannot be solved. However, for this to happen, those who inflicted others should learn from their past failure. In doing so, it becomes possible to move the long journey together with glorious hope and bright future and reveal the dream of sustainable development.

When we say Synergy, we mean leaving aside the hate, revenge, and ethnic-based violence as well as avoiding racist action and respect for an individual only for being human. This is the essence of Ubuntu/Synergy that can ensure individual freedom and social wellbeing. Furthermore, in Synergy, every nation and nationality will be tied together in the sense of togetherness by weaving their history, culture, art, economic, and spiritual wealth. Creating consensus also implies a degree of reciprocity and shared values.

Not only in education, Ubuntu/Synergy is also helpful for every sector because it emphasizes reciprocal relationships and the notion of contributing to a common goal. This type of goal is more likely to be met if consensus is reached [33]. There are plenty of advocates for the role

of Ubuntu in conflict mediation, community reconciliation, and peacekeeping. Significantly, the late President of South Africa (Mandela’s) idea was that you could only transform society by encouraging reconciliation and promoting understanding, even love, between all the different constituents. He highlighted the connectedness and interdependence of all peoples in any community [46].

Generally, Synergy/Ubuntu advocates groups by focusing on individuals coming out of one’s group or ethnicity and think positively, embracing all human beings as brothers and sisters. Hence, such gorgeous values can be a philosophical backdrop for education which will integrate indigenous values with the Western education system. It placed its foundation in the particularists philosophical views of education such as preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism, and holism, which can render the philosophical foundations of the education system. Its content was based on physical, social, and spiritual milieu. Such contents should also appear at all levels of education to enhance the relevance and provide context for better understanding. Therefore, the educational philosophy of Africans/Ethiopia should emanate from the nation’s existing problems that the people face.

The African philosophy of education should center on context and locality. In addition, it should incorporate the particular historical, geographic, and sociocultural experiences of the people and provide feedback to particular priorities. It should also connect theory with practice. Indeed, it can also contribute to enriching the philosophy of education elsewhere by offering conceptual tools.

In conclusion, when we say indigenous values, it also includes the language used as a medium of instruction. It is commendable that the main problem of Ethiopian university students is not learning difficulties but language difficulties. Many scholars argued that it is only by replacing English with Ethiopian language as a medium of instruction that Ethiopia can achieve sustained development and social cohesion [1, 17]. Therefore, as philosophy is about world view and is also debatable, wider empirical research may be necessary on how to enculturate the proposed philosophy into specific educational contexts.

Furthermore, the paper also recommends that the philosophy of education of a country should be explicit and should address the social and cultural milieu of the people in charge. Not only this, the education system should integrate the IK of the people with its associated worldview for students to walk in two worlds and spring from the local (known) to the global (unknown).

Data Availability

This paper is based on literature and government documents. All used sources are listed in the reference section of the paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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All sources used for this study are duly acknowledged.

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