

# THE ROLE OF METAPHYSICS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIVE-CENTRIC EDUCATION

Ikechukwu Monday Osebor, Ph.D.  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2642-662X>; [ikechukwu.osebor@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:ikechukwu.osebor@unidel.edu.ng)

Benson Peter Irabor  
Doctoral Research Student, Department of Philosophy  
University of Lagos  
[benpet1@yahoo.com](mailto:benpet1@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

*This study is an exposition of the role of metaphysics in the development of Native-centric education. Native-centric education is the aboriginal teaching and learning of indigenous values from centric paradigms. It is an indigenous education based on the customs, conventions, and values of a people, which are transmitted through storytelling, folklore, myths, and many others. The problem that this paper sets out to address is the common notion that metaphysics is an abstract discipline that has no relevance in education. Using the research method of hermeneutics, this study holds that metaphysics is both material and immaterial studies of the ultimate reality, and native-centric education is included in the search for ultimate realities. The study concludes that metaphysics enhances indigenous holism for students, teachers and values judgment in the development of curriculum, teaching methods, administration, and educational goals based on metaphysical assumptions. The study recommends policy makers to implement native-centric education into public policy. This of course, would help to enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance of native centric education and metaphysics and to close minds against speculation on educational development.*

**Keywords:** Metaphysics, Native Centric Education, Ontological, Cosmological, Anthropological, God

## Introduction

Traditionally, philosophy has four core branches which are Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics and Logic (Akinsanya, 2006). Metaphysics is the core of all philosophy and relevant not only in education but in all facets of life (Unah, 2006; Iroegbu, 1995). The fundamental question of metaphysics should therefore be: "Why is there essence rather than nothing, "Water", said Thales; "Fire", said Heraclitus; "The Infinite", said Anaximander; "Number," said Pythagoras. Over time, metaphysics has been understood in different ways. Metaphysics, as the study of three components of life: cosmology, cosmogony, and ontology (Unah, 2006; Iroegbu, 1995). The corporate names for cosmology (what exists), cosmogony (the origin of what exists), and ontology (the

constituent of what exists) (Unah, 2006; Iroegbu, 1995). Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality. "What is ultimately real?" is the basic question of metaphysics (Omogbe, 1996; Knight, 2006) Science is diminished when indigenous values are not critically reflected; hence, native-centric education opposes sciences that concern themselves with only mobile technology and quantum techniques without recourse to the traditional education of the future generation. Despite the criticism and rhetoric of metaphysics, which has been heralded as seemingly a way out of the development impasse it has contributed to the development of indigenous education through metaphysical assumptions (Mika, 2019). The study of reality is comprehensive in scope and fundamental principles that determine the real nature of things and knowledge of supra-sensible education such as native-centric education (Onyewuenyi, 1994). Native Centric education interrogates values that are beyond sense experiences, leading to the question, what is the nature of God in African worldviews? Is the world a product of creation, evolution, or chance? Is man a determined or free being? Why this world instead of nothing? Does God exist? Why man at all, or why reality itself? Why being? Why matter? What is the ultimate ground of existence, or reality? These questions and many more gave rise to the various aspects of metaphysical education.

### **Research methodology**

Hermeneutics is one of the various approaches used by researchers to unravel the metaphysical nature of things, the ultimate realities for clarity (Abulad, 2007). Hermeneutics is the act of interpreting words or concepts such as metaphysics, education, native centric, and many others to gain knowledge or a better understanding of the words used in the study (Abulad, 2007). This method of doing philosophy may not be new, but it provides new insight into solving philosophical problems that seek to assess complex systems of thought by 'interpreting or analyzing ' them into simpler elements whose relationships are thereby brought into focus" (Baldwin, 1998). It seeks to review metaphysical ideas and break them down into simple words or terms to gain an in-depth reflection of the concepts of the research. Hermeneutics is to "decipher the meaning of the written words as used in the sources we consulted" (Abulad, 2007). The core of hermeneutics is to provide insights into the human experience, not only metaphysical issues (Benson, 2022). However, philosophical hermeneutics may not give a final answer to philosophical problems. It provides insights for reflective equilibrium that could allow researchers to perform a wider investigation of metaphysical issues (Benson, 2022).

### **Metaphysical Questions in the Search of Ultimate Realities**

**COSMOLOGICAL:** One central branch or aspect of metaphysics is cosmology. It is teaching and learning about the origin (if it has one), fundamental structure, nature, and dynamics of the universe. This branch of metaphysics talks about the physical universe in its entirety. It deals with the original nature and development of the universe and how it works. The orderliness of the world and how events follow one after another in time, e.g., does the universe have a rational design or is it ultimately meaningless? In other words, cosmology consists of indigenous explanations of theories about the origin, nature, and

development of the universe as an ordered system. "How did the universe originate and develop?" is a cosmological question. The questions posed by the early metaphysicians arose after physical problems had been considered, and such questions undertook to evaluate and interpret the physical theories in other non-physical terms. This was the tradition from which the earlier philosophers sprang. The pre-Socratic philosophers were not satisfied with the mythological explanations offered by the prevalent Greek polytheistic religion; they were the first to use the skills of human thought to solve certain problems that arose from the physical nature of the cosmos (Onyewuenyi, I 1994). As earlier mentioned, the early Greek philosophers, after developing a crude system of scientific 'explanation' in terms of earth, air, fire, and water, asked whether these were the fundamental elements of the natural universe or whether something else accounted for the four elements and the events of nature. In trying to respond to the above question, some of the early metaphysicians became pluralists (Onyewuenyi, I 1994). The pluralists were those who held that more than one feature of the universe accounted for scientific knowledge of it. On the other hand, others insisted that there was one and only one basic feature, and these became monists. Theological theology is that part of religious theory that has to do with conceptions of and about God. Is there a God? If so, is there one or more than one? What are the attributes of God? If God is both good and all-powerful, how is it that evil exists? Are there beings such as angels, Satan, and the Holy Spirit? If so, what is their relationship to God? These and similar questions have been debated throughout human history. People answer these questions in a variety of ways: atheists claim that there is no God, while pantheists posit that God and the universe are identical—all is God, and God is all. Deists view God as the maker of nature and moral laws but assert that God exists apart from, and is not interested in, humanity and the physical universe (Ofuasia, 2017). On the other hand, atheists believe in a personal creator, God. Polytheism is opposed to monotheism regarding the question of the number of gods. Polytheism holds that the deity should be thought of as plural, while monotheism insists there is only one God (Iroegbu, 1995) Anthropology is the study of human beings. The anthropological aspect of philosophy is a unique category since, unlike other areas of human investigation; humanity is both the subject and the object of inquiry. When people philosophize about humanity, they are speaking about themselves. The anthropological aspect of philosophy asks questions like the following: What is the relationship between mind and body? Is there an interaction between mind and body? Is the mind more foundational than the body, with the body depending on the mind, or vice versa? What is humanity's moral status? Are people born good, evil, or morally neutral? To what extent are individuals free? Do they have free will, or are their thoughts and actions determined by their environment and inheritance? Do individuals have souls? If so, what is it? People have adopted different positions on these questions, and those positions are reflected in their political, social, religious, and educational practices and designs. Ontological: The ontological branch of metaphysics is ontology, which is the investigation into the basic categories of being and how they relate to each other. Ontology studies are divided into their general properties, primary divisions, and universal characteristics (Iroegbu, 1995). The basic question that philosophy must ultimately address is the question of being. Any philosophy that bypasses or underrates the question of doing so does so at its peril and risks the possibility of relegation. Ontology, therefore, is the study of the nature of existence, or

what it means for anything to be. Several questions are central to ontology: Is there a basic reality found in matter or physical energy (the world we can see) or is it found in spirit or spiritual energy? Is it composed of one element (e.g., matter or spirit) or two (many)? Is reality orderly and lawful in itself, or is it merely ordered by theorists? Is it fixed and stable, or does it change its central features? Is this reality friendly, unfriendly, or neutral regarding humanity? (Knight, 2006).

### **The Concept of Native-Centric Education**

The concept of Native Centric Education was first coined by Dr. Ikechukwu Monday Osebor in the year 2020. Currently, Dr. I.M Osebor is a philosopher at the Department of Philosophy University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria. In an article entitled "Reintroduction of Native Centric Education for Children in the COVID-19 Lockdown," *Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health*, Osebor argued that Native Centric Education is an act of parenting, a locally developed moral personhood formed to bring up children in line with their cultural values by their parents, older and more experienced members of the tribe or community (Monday, 2020). It studies native-centered epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. The mode of transmission of native-centric education is mostly oral from generation to generation. Local-centric education is based on traditional socialization and the humanistic foundations of goodwill, which help to unearth the uniqueness of the child in a moral community (Monday, 2020). In other words, Native-centric education is an indigenous experience that creates a formative effect on the mind, the behavior or character of a person, and physical ability. It is a deliberate transition of cultural heritage, accumulated knowledge, values, and skills, from one generation to another (Osebor, 2023). Native-centric education is a continuous reconstruction of experience and the adjustment of the individual to society. It is also concerned with the moral, physical, mental, societal, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual adjustment of an individual. Community education is a means of imparting or acquiring knowledge and responsibility for society (Taiwo, 1981) Native-centric "education is the reconstruction or re-organization of experiences that increase the ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences. It entails the traditional, intellectual, and moral development of learners, which is expected to result in a positive transformation of the individual. This enables an individual to show the right conduct to other members of society. Although indigenous practices and beliefs are affected by globalization, an individual education makes an individual develop and metaphysical reflection of a sound mind in a sound body because of the impacts of both the mind and the body. Similarly, Native centric education is the development of the individual from within by interacting with the natural environment to fit properly into society (Osebor, 2023). The goal of native-centric education the goals is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of the society; to enable the young to live in and serve the society; and to prepare them for their future membership in the society (Monday, 2020). It involves the active participation of society in the maintenance and development of its members. The foregoing definitions indicate that native-centric education is informative because it has to do with the oral transmission and communication of ideas and facts that

are meant to achieve some definitive goals and objectives. It is formative since the facts given in the information are fashioned to constitute the mental and personality structure of the recipient. They prompt one to behave in a more controlled and reasonably regulated manner, which affects a person's way of life. It is reformatory because it may help to adjust an already structured pattern or behavior. Native Centric education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior that are of positive value to society through indigenous knowledge (Fafunwa, 1972; Monday, 2020). Notable native-centric education may come in three forms. These are formal education, informal education, and non-formal education. Formal education (African philosophy, African religion, and many others) has to do with the type of education received in institutions of learning, and it creates a means where the teacher and the learner can interact for the learner to receive education (Osebor, 2023; Makumba, 2005), Informal education deals with receiving education that is not obtained in formal settings. It could be education provided by the home, religious bodies, or society at large. As such, stories are usually used to amuse and express feelings (Akinsanya, 2015). Osebor argue that native centric education employs stories not only to amuse and express feelings but also to teach ideal forms of behavior and morality. Exploring such abstract, evidence-resistant metaphysical questions might seem pointless but it is a science that makes grand arguments and constructs complex theories about the fundamental nature of reality, its laws, and its emergent properties? (Jack, 20210)

### **The Relevance of Metaphysics in Native-Centric Education**

Metaphysical systems have in the past gone so abstract, hair-splitting, and grossly noumenal that they were completely removed from the very reality they set out to explain. Metaphysics is not only regarded as a mere substance but as a system of facts. The "idea of substances as an ideological illusion fail to meet the needs of the contemporary times in education, we consider substances, forces, and all metaphysical beings of the modern era a relic of scholastic realities as both material and immaterial. We think that there is nothing in the world but facts and laws, that is to say, events and their relations. We recognize that all knowledge consists in the first instance in linking or in adding facts" (Copleston, 1975). Do we reduce metaphysics to only abstract identities, if not empiricism? Metaphysics addresses the burning problems of concrete reality at its level and with its method. Any relevant metaphysics cannot fail to address the questions of what is after-life, the fate of the dead, the relationship between this life and after-life, and what are the ethical-ontological constituents of the human person in the vast reality of which he is a part? These and numerous other investigations about man, the world, and God must seriously preoccupy the metaphysician to contribute to the meaning of reality in the world (Copleston, 1975). The above statement simply implies that metaphysics, even though abstract, is still relevant to education and human society since it deals with reality. Native-centric education is to provide definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves, because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich

our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic assurance that closes the mind against speculation. It helps through the greatness of the universe, which indigenous education contemplates; the mind also becomes great and becomes capable of that union with the universe, which constitutes its highest good. Behind the judgment of native-centric curriculum, teaching methods, administration, and educational goals are based on metaphysical assumption (Farayola, 2002) Indigenous knowledge studies the nature of reality. It forms the basis on which we perceive and give meaning to our existence. Native-centric education is a discipline that deals with knowledge, reality, and existence. All systems of education, including the various educational systems, have some metaphysical basic presuppositions, foundations, and ontologies of their own, although they are rarely explicitly or consciously conceived (Ofuasia, & Dasaolu, 2017). Native-centric education enhances questioning capability; hence, we question everything, even our existence. It plays an important role in satisfying this eagerness to know about ourselves, existence and the relevance of metaphysics to education (Onyewuenyi, 1994). Knight (2006) writes that the knowledge of ultimate reality is central in African philosophy and education. The educational program must lay an indigenous foundation, which helps to interrogate illusion or imagination. Metaphysics is important for native-centric educators and students; it provides critical reflection and formulation of policies and the justification of values or standards in traditional African society Knight, 2006). It is problem-solving that provides an overarching framework that guides human interactions with nature, the foundation of the educational process, and understanding of the nature of man (Osebor, 2023). Whichever conception we take, it has implications. Metaphysics in native-centric education is not only theory but practical. Knight (2006) holds that the very purpose of metaphysics in education is viewed as an anthropological consideration that lies extremely close to the aims of education. Elton puts it this way: until we are clear on what man is, we shall not be clear about much else. One spin-off of the centrality of anthropological considerations in education is the role of native-centric education study in the training of teachers. Native-centric education is an inquiry that examines the nature of man and life, the nature of man's essence, and his being through indigenous approaches (Onyewuenyi, 1994). Although many Native-centric educators lack the training to deal with the contradictions that metaphysics conveys, metaphysics stimulates curiosity (Mika, 2019). It acquaints students with the most basic of all questions (causality, time and space, existence, and consciousness). In other words, it is important because it helps with reason and questions that need the origin of things. For example, what is the origin of man? The problem with metaphysics in the development of native-centric education is freedom (or free will and determinism). Determinism affirms that all men's actions are determined because men are never free. Free will, on the other hand, asserts that man is free. Man, therefore, has the power of choice and creativity (Okoro, 2011). Thus, the question of freedom and determinism is paramount in educational metaphysics. The ontological aspect of metaphysics is also very important for students. Ontology deals with the problems of the nature of being and existence in general. It is defined as a philosophical inquiry into the ultimate nature of being itself, its origin, and its essence. Questions are based on reality. For example, what is reality? What is it supposed to be? What is existence? These questions lead to an examination of the nature of man and life, the nature of man's existence and

being, and different kinds of life. Ontology enables the students to reason beyond earthly things; by so doing, they learn about themselves and the need to have a 'base in life by knowing themselves (Ezeani, and Ojih, 1996).

### Conclusion:

The study is an appraisal and an in-depth analysis of the roles of metaphysics in the development of native centric education. The study discussed different conceptions of metaphysics and their challenges. The study maintains that metaphysics is both material and immaterial elements of realities; it is relevant for sustainable education and improving the traditional values of African society. The study suggests proper implementation of native-centric education into public policy for the common good of society.

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