

## **Education and Human Dignity: Connections and Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

New circumstances have arisen in the past decades of human history that call for a more profound discourse on human dignity, especially as it relates to other dimensions of human existence. The peculiarity of this paper among other papers on human dignity is that it makes a nexus between human dignity and education, an area of interest that has not received adequate attention of scholars. And by human dignity, this paper places its understanding within the context of the universal human dignity that pertains to all human beings to the same extent and cannot be lost as long as one is a human being. It is within the context of universal human dignity that this paper is making a connection between education and human dignity, and presents education as a means of advancing the dignity of the human person. The human rights, religious and indigenous frameworks will be employed for the purpose of creating a road-map for the sail of the paper. The expository and analytical methods of inquiry will also be employed. The paper discovered that the education of the human person is the promotion of the dignity of the human being.

**Keywords:** Education, Human Dignity, Connections, Perspectives

### **Introduction**

A cursory glance at the happenings around the world, which include racism, xenophobia, war, kidnapping, violence, etc., have created new circumstances for discussions on human dignity. And the fact that it is happening in Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Oceania

and Antarctica reveals that issues around human dignity is a global phenomenon.

The creation of a sense of worth among people in the society provides an environment of equality, respect and justice

in which people feel respected and valued<sup>1</sup>. This can lower feelings of alienation, frustration or marginalization, which are often underlying factors of various expressions of violence and other forms of division in society. The promotion of human dignity also has the capacity for addressing root causes of the feelings of the absence of dignity among people<sup>2</sup>. For the achievement of human dignity, there is need for an intentional approach that celebrates human dignity and educates the members of society on the value of human dignity.

Considering education in relation to the promotion of human dignity presents education as transcending the mere acquisition of information. In this context, education becomes a pathway for society to unearth the self-identity of individuals, assimilate core values, cultivate personal accountability and comprehend unique disposition and identity<sup>3</sup>. It is in this sense

that Kant holds that education provides a path for individuals to transcend their limited perspectives, enabling them to think beyond mere self-centred interests<sup>4</sup>. It is also in this sense, that it is said that humans can only truly actualize their humanity through the process of education, given that one's evolution is shaped by the educational experiences, thus, indicating that the promotion of respect and protection of human dignity is a significant responsibility for education<sup>5</sup>.

This paper studies human dignity in relation to education, believing that the philosophy of human dignity is fundamentally part of the process of education. In this process, with the emphasis of education on critical thinking, tolerance, etc., through education about human dignity, education through human dignity, and education for human dignity<sup>6</sup>, education can guide future

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<sup>1</sup>Krug, Etienne G., James A. Mercy, Linda L. Dahlberg, and Anthony B. Zwi. 2002. The World Report on Violence and Health. *The Lancet* 360: 1083–88; Smith, Jackie. 2019. Human Rights City Initiatives as a Peoples Peace Process. In *People's Peace Processes*. New York: Syracuse University Press, pp. 181–201.

<sup>2</sup>Ljubotina, Predrag, and Andrej Raspor. 2022. Recovery of Slovenian Tourism After Covid-19 and Ukraine Crisis. *ECONOMICS* 10: 55–72.

<sup>3</sup>Saveikaitė, Justina. 2014. The Influence of Civic Education on Young People in Lithuania. *Social Education* 1: 18–3; Pangrčič, Polonca, Jasmina Kristovič, and Sebastjan Kristovič. 2022. The Readiness of Educational Professionals for Sustainable Development in Education in Slovenia. *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* 32: 145; Kristovič, Sebastjan, Jasmina Kristovič, and Polonca Pangrčič. 2023. Application of the UNESCO Guidelines and the Holistic Approach in the Slovenian Education System/Primjena UNESCO-Ovih Smjernica i Holističkoga Pristupa u Slovenskom Obrazovnom Sustavu. *Croatian Journal*

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of Education—Hrvatski Časopis Za Odgoj i Obrazovanje 25: 2

<sup>4</sup>Kant, Immanuel. 2018. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>5</sup>Hoguane, Isabel, and Anselmo Orlando Pinto. 2023. Education as a Way of Promoting Human Dignity. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 8: 149–55; Reardon, Betty. 1995. *Educating for Human Dignity: Learning about Rights and Responsibilities*. Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Sporre, Karin. 2015. In *Search of Human Dignity: Essays in Theology, Ethics and Education*. Religious Diversity and Education in Europe. Münster and New York: Waxmann, vol. 29.

<sup>6</sup>Kleindienst, Petra. 2016. Education on Human Dignity as an Integral Part of Citizenship Education. *Research in Social Change* 8: 75–94; Kleindienst, Petra. 2017. Understanding the Different Dimensions of Human Dignity: Analysis of the Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia on the »Tito Street« Case. *DANUBE: Law and Economics Review* 8: 117–37; Kleindienst, Petra. 2022. The Role of Catholic Schools in Promoting

generations towards the understanding and appreciation of human dignity. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to establish the connection between education and the promotion of human dignity, and how the element of human dignity is at the heart of the educational process, and how the understanding and valuing of human dignity is itself an education.

### **Understanding human dignity**

There are varieties of dignity and understanding of human dignity, however, for the purpose of clarity and precision, there is the need to define the different types of human dignity and the concept of human dignity that this work adopts.

- a. Dignity of merit, which depends on social rank and position. There are many species of this kind of dignity and it is very unevenly distributed among human beings. The dignity of merit can come and go<sup>7</sup>.
- b. Dignity of moral or existential stature is based on the moral deeds of the subject. It can be reduced or lost through immoral deeds, and is unevenly distributed<sup>8</sup>.
- c. Dignity of identity, which is tied to the integrity of the subject's body and mind. This dignity can come and go as a result of

the deeds of fellow human beings and the changes in the subject's body and mind<sup>9</sup>.

d. Universal human dignity pertains to all human beings to the same extent and cannot be lost as long as one is a human being<sup>10</sup>.

It is based on the belief that all people hold a special value that is tied to their humanity. It has nothing to do with race, colour, religion, culture, class, status, gender, ability, advantage, etc., other than being human. It means that a person has dignity or deserves dignity as a result of their human status<sup>11</sup>.

The article on human dignity, is the first article in the list of the Fundamental Human

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Human Dignity. *British Journal of Religious Education* 44: 348–60; Kleindienst, Petra, and Matevž Tomšič. 2022. Human Dignity as the Foundation of Democratic Political Culture: Legal and Philosophical Perspective. *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 18: 385–404; Golob, Tea, Matej Makarovič, and Matevž Tomšič. 2020. Pomen religioznosti za evropsko identiteto mladih. *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 80: 1.

<sup>7</sup>Nordenfelt L. The varieties of dignity. *Health Care Anal.* 2004 Jun;12(2):69-81; discussion 83-89. doi: 10.1023/B:HCAN.0000041183.78435.4b. PMID: 15487812.

<sup>8</sup>Nordenfelt L. The varieties of dignity. 69-81

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<sup>9</sup>Nordenfelt L. The varieties of dignity. 69-81

<sup>10</sup>Nordenfelt L. The varieties of dignity. 69-81

<sup>11</sup>Rosen, Michael. 2018. *Dignity: Its History and Meaning*. First Harvard University Press paperback ed. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press; Sarat, Austin, ed. 2022. *Human Dignity. Studies in Law, Politics and Society*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing, vol. 88; Mahmoudi, Hoda, and Michael L. Penn, eds. 2020. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Dignity and Human Rights*, 1st ed. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited; McCrudden, Christopher. 2008. *Human Dignity and Judicial Interpretation of Human Rights*. *European Journal of International Law* 19: 655–724; Barak, Aharon. 2013. *Understanding Human Dignity*. London: British Academy; Bird, Colin. 2023. *Human Dignity and Political Criticism*, First Paperback ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; McCrudden, Christopher, ed. 2014. *Understanding Human Dignity: Outcome of a Conference Held in Rhodes House, Oxford*, in June 2012, Paperback ed. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 192. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Donnelly, Jack. 2013. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Rights: Article 1 states that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. It is a dignity that all human beings are born with, and simply means that all human beings deserve respect<sup>12</sup>. It is within the context of universal human dignity that we are making a connection between education and human dignity. It is also within this context that further discussions would be understood.

### **Articulating the problem**

Given the fundamental role that education plays in the promotion of the dignity of the human person, it is surprising that the relationship between human dignity and education has not received more attention in the works of scholars in recent years. The present article draws attention to the relationship between human dignity and education, while articulating human dignity as a basis for education and also the contribution that education makes to the promotion of human dignity. This work, therefore, focuses on an understanding of the relationship between human dignity and education, and the contribution that each makes to the other.

In discussing this relationship, some frameworks shall be employed for the articulation of the position of the researchers on this issue. These frameworks include the human rights framework, the religious framework and the African framework.

### **Human rights framework**

Education can be studied through the lens of human dignity based on two documents, which are declarations of the United Nations. These documents include the Fundamental Human Rights of 1948 and the Declaration of the Rights of Children of 1959.

#### **a. Fundamental human rights 1948**

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. These rights are based on the value of the human person and not on any other ground.

The right to education, in Article 26, is presented as one of the fundamental human rights that people possess, given that: it raises men and women out of poverty; it levels inequalities, and ensures sustainable development.

It does not only protect but enhances the human dignity through the above mentioned points. Human rights reflect basic human needs; they establish the basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity. Human rights are about equality, dignity, respect, freedom and justice<sup>13</sup>.

#### **b. Declaration of the Rights of Children 1959**

After drafting the fundamental human rights, the United Nations still saw the need to focus on the child. They thus chose to draft a second Declaration of the Rights of the

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<sup>12</sup>Human Rights Career, What is Human Dignity? Common definitions. <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/definitions-what-is-human-dignity>, 2023.

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<sup>13</sup>Council of Europe, Introducing human rights education; Betty A. Reardon: Educating for Human Dignity – Learning about rights and responsibilities, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995

Child, which addressed in a unique manner the idea that “mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give.”<sup>14</sup> For the reason that the child has dignity.

On 20 November 1959, the declaration was adopted unanimously by all 78 Member States of the United Nations General Assembly. It was adopted with the universal understanding or recognition of the child “...as a human being who must be able to develop physically, mentally, socially, morally, and spiritually, with freedom and dignity.”<sup>15</sup>

Making a connection between education and human dignity, the document, therefore, devotes two of the ten articles on the rights of the child to education. Article 5 states that: “The right to special education and treatment when a child is physically or mentally handicapped”. Article 7 states that: “The right to recreational activities and free education”. This right is not based on the colour, race, status, opportunities of the child. These rights are due the child for the reason that the child is a human being, and, therefore, has dignity.

### Religious framework

The idea of human dignity is not limited to the above documented declarations. All religions recognize that human beings are essentially equal, given that human beings were created in the image and likeness of

God, and, therefore, sacred. Human beings are understood as begotten of immortality or children of immortality<sup>16</sup>. This is in the sense of the Book of Genesis (1:26), in which we learn that this dignity is the special gift from God who created human beings as special beings in his own likeness. God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”<sup>17</sup>. In fact, there is a strong Christian root of the concept of human dignity. The Christian understanding of human dignity is the core of the Catholic Church’s contribution to basic European values on the whole<sup>18</sup>.

Church documents on education: *Gravissimum Educationis* of 1965 and *Divini Illius Magistri* of 1929<sup>19</sup> emphasize the importance of education for the simple reason of the dignity of the human person. *Gravissimum Educationis* refers to Fundamental Human Rights and the

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<sup>16</sup>Human Rights Career, What is Human Dignity? Common definitions. <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/definitions-what-is-human-dignity>, 2023; Calvin, I., 1874, in A. Tholuck (ed.), *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Pars Prior, G Eichler, Berlin.

<sup>17</sup>Friedrich Schweitzer, Human Dignity and Education- A Protestant View. *HTS Theological Studies*, Vol. 26. No. 4. 2016. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3436>, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Friedrich Schweitzer, Human Dignity and Education- A Protestant View. *HTS Theological Studies*, Vol. 26. No. 4. 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3436>, p. 1.; EKD, 2006, *Erklärung des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) aus Anlass der Ratspräsidentschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Europäischen Union*. 29. Dezember 2006, viewed 30 October 2015, from <http://www.ekd.de/aktuell/51859.html>

<sup>19</sup>Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Encyclical On Education. [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_31121929\\_divini-illius-magistri.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html), 1929

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<sup>14</sup>Declaration of the Rights of the Child, <https://www.humanium.org/en/declaration-rights-child-2> 1959

<sup>15</sup>Declaration of the Rights of the Child, <https://www.humanium.org/en/declaration-rights-child-2> 1959

declaration on the rights of the child and holds that: “It All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country”<sup>20</sup>. The document adds:

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup>Pope Paul VI, *Gravatum Educationis*, Declaration on education. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html)1965

<sup>21</sup>Pope Paul VI, *Gravatum Educationis*, Declaration on education.

The emphasis on human dignity is anchored on the relationship between God and the human person who has been created in the image and likeness of God. The human person was not created to be static but to advance through the process of education.

### **Afro-indigenous framework**

This framework will help in providing an African perspective to the understanding of the relationship between education and the human dignity.

#### **a. Mmadu Ibem**

Among the Igbo, the human person is called *Mmadu*, which has been interpreted, among other perspectives to mean *there is beauty*. *The human person is referred to as Mmadu because of his or her relationship with the divine being. Given this relationship, the human person has dignity and must be respected. This also places the human person above animals and other creatures*<sup>22</sup>.

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[https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html)1965

<sup>22</sup> Kanu, I. A., Igwebuike ethics: Towards the unity of ethical traditions in Africa. *AMAMIHE: Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 21. No. 2. 2023, pp. 1-20; Kanu, I. A., Igwebuike metaphysics: A complementary perspective. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 9. No. 2. 2023, pp. 1-21; Kanu, I. A., *IGWEBUIKE: An Operative Condition of African Philosophy, Religion and Culture- Towards a Thermodynamic Transformative Ontology*. Maiden Professorial Inaugural Lecture, delivered on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> February. Yola: Autograde, 2021, p. 33.

Referring to the other human person, the Igbo would use the word *Ibe*, which means ‘a piece of’ or ‘a part of’, as in *ibe anu* (a piece of meat) or *ibe ede* (a piece of cocoyam). The Igbo would, therefore, speak of the ‘other person’ as *ibe m*, which means ‘my piece’ or *mmadu ibe m* (my fellow human being). This is the concept also employed in reference to relationships and reciprocity: love one another (*hunu ibe unu n’anya*), help one another (*nyere nu ibe unu aka*), respect one another (*sopuru nu ibe unu*), etc. Since the ‘other’ refers to my own piece, it would, therefore, mean that to love the other is to love oneself, to help the other is to help oneself and to respect the other is to respect oneself. Put the other way round, to hate the other is to hate oneself, to refuse help to the other is to refuse help to oneself and to disrespect the other is to disrespect oneself<sup>23</sup>.

According to Ewulu, the use of *ibe* applies to all forms of relationship with the other. He expressed it as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> Person singular: *ibe m* (my piece (s)/my part (s)); 2<sup>nd</sup> Person singular: *ibe gi* (your piece (s)/your part (s)); 3<sup>rd</sup> Person singular: *ibe ya* (his/her piece (s)/his/her part (s)); 1<sup>st</sup> Person plural: *ibe anyi* (our piece (s)/our part (s)); 2<sup>nd</sup> Person plural: *ibe unu* (your piece (s)/your part (s)); 3<sup>rd</sup> Person plural: *ibe ha* (their piece

(s)/their part (s))<sup>24</sup>. In a paradoxical way, he writes that:

The term *ibe* brings out the reciprocity tension between the self and the other. The self is always implicated in the other. The self’s reference to the other always points back to the self. I am, as it were, in the other and the other is in me. He is my piece as I am his piece. That which is different from me is ‘my piece’ or ‘my other’. That which is different from us is part of us<sup>25</sup>.

In relation to education, this would mean that when I educate the other person, I am actually helping myself, and when the other person is denied education, it ends up as a disservice to myself and the entire society.

#### **b. Nkuzi**

Given that the human person is not a finished product, that is why the idea of Nkuzi becomes very important among the Igbo. Nkuzi literally means:

- (a.) to beat into shape, in such a manner that that which is being beaten is made better;
- (b.) it also means to show; in this case, an illumination is involved. In illumination, a light is cast on the illumined in such a

<sup>23</sup> Kanu, I. A., “Igwebuiké as an Igbo-African Hermeneutic of Globalization”. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 10. No. 2. 2018, pp. 61-66; Kanu, I. A., Philosophy, Self-Determination, Peace and Intercultural Co-existence in Nigeria: An Igwebuiké Perspective. *UNIZIK Journal of Religion and Human Relations*. Vol. 14. No. 1. 2022, pp. 100-130; Kanu, I. A., Igwebuiké philosophy of interculturality: Towards a shared conceptual philosophical space. *OCHENDO: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*. Vol. 4. No. 2. 2023, pp. 1-14.

<sup>24</sup> Ekwulu, B. I., Igbo concept of Ibe (the other) as a philosophical solution to the ethnic conflicts in African countries. In B. I. Ekwulu (Ed.), *philosophical reflections on African issues*. Enugu: Delta, 2010. pp. 183-192.

<sup>25</sup> Ekwulu, B. I., Igbo concept of Ibe (the other) as a philosophical solution to the ethnic conflicts in African countries. In B. I. Ekwulu (Ed.), *philosophical reflections on African issues*. Enugu: Delta, 2010. pp. 188

manner that the illumined becomes brighter than it was.

In either of the cases: beating into shape or illumining, the beauty of that which is illumined or panel beaten becomes brighter. It is through education that the beauty and the dignity of the human person becomes more visible and realized. Here, education is understood as continuing the work of creation; and as the collaboration of the human person with the divine in the act of creation<sup>26</sup>. It is in this sense that the human person is considered a co-creator.

### **The human dignity and the focus of education**

The human person and the protection of the human dignity should be the focus of education. In the pedagogical model, the teacher has full responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if the material has been learned<sup>27</sup>. Pedagogy, or teacher-directed instruction as it is commonly known, places the student in a submissive role requiring obedience to the teacher's instructions. It is based on the assumption that learners need to know only what the teacher teaches them. The teacher has nothing to learn from the student, even though experience contradicts this. The result is a teaching and learning situation

that actively promotes dependency on the instructor<sup>28</sup>.

The pedagogical system of education, which is popular in Africa has created a scenario of 'a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening object (the student); the contents tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified'. The student is charged with the primary responsibility of memorizing mechanically the narrated content. Thus, the student who is supposed to be a receiver, an observer, a synthesizer and an internalizer, is turned into a mere container. Like a tunnel which is less affected by the fluid, the content passes through him and he does not pass through it. In this process of learning, the more completely the teacher fills the receptacle, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better student they are<sup>29</sup>. Thus, words are transmitted without any reflection on them. Since creativity is borne out of reflection, this kind of knowledge has no place for creativity.

In Africa (Nigeria) we witness a scenario where we read and read but are still not beneficiaries of the dividends of the liberating process of education. A sound system of education that respects the dignity of the child must involve a free interplay between the basic elements of change and permanence, but the banking system allows

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<sup>26</sup>Comenius, J.A., 1965, in D. Tschizewskij (ed.), *Pampaedia. Lateinischer Text und deutsche Übersetzung*, 2nd edn., Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg.

<sup>27</sup>Knowles, M. (1984). *The adult learner*. Retrieved 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2010

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<sup>28</sup>Hiemstra, R. & Sisco, B. (1990). *Moving from pedagogy to andragogy: Individualizing instruction*. San Francisco: JosseyBass

<sup>29</sup>Freire, P., *The pedagogy of the oppressed*, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972.

only for a monologue of permanence which closes all doors to breakthroughs<sup>30</sup>.

The consequence of the banking method, is that the African student is turned into a depository and the teacher a depositor and an issuer of communiqués rather than a communicator. And as a result of what we may refer to a colonial hangover, the teacher expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the student. His task is to fill the student with the content of his narration-contents which are detached from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity<sup>31</sup>. This process of receiving, filling, and storing the deposits limits the entire process of education.

The student is turned into a robot and denied his right to the ontological vocation of being human, since the automation of the human person is irreconcilable with the vocation to be fully human. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted them, the less they develop the crucial consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformer of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to

the fragmented view of reality deposited in them<sup>32</sup>.

The pedagogical or banking system of education goes well with the colonial scheme, in which the killing of the creative power of the oppressed serves the special interest of the oppressor. So that they would remain as lords to the oppressed; they neither provide the elements that reveal the world of the oppressed or the facilities that transform it. The interest of the oppressor lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them. For, the more they are made to be content of a partial view of reality, and a non-experimental education which is supposed to stimulate their crucial faculty the more they are easily ruled, dominated and exploited<sup>33</sup>.

### **Educational exclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Globally, 244 million children and youth are still out of school for social, economic and cultural reasons. And this obvious worst in some places like Africa. Of all regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion. Over one-fifth of children between the ages of about 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by one-third of youth between the ages of about 12 and 14. According to UIS data, almost 60% of youth between the ages of about 15 and 17 are not in school<sup>34</sup>. Carrying on this statistics to the

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<sup>30</sup> Kanu, I. A. & Paul Haaga, *A Philosophical Approach to Education for the Transformation and Humanization of Africa*, pp. 29-37.

<sup>31</sup> Kanu, I. A. & Paul Haaga, *A Philosophical Approach to Education for the Transformation and Humanization of Africa*, pp. 29-37.

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<sup>32</sup> Freire, P., *The pedagogy of the oppressed*, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972.

<sup>33</sup> Kanu, I. A. & Paul Haaga, *A Philosophical Approach to Education for the Transformation and Humanization of Africa*, pp. 29-37.

<sup>34</sup> UNESCO, Education in Africa. UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

university level, we are likely to have more than 60% of out of schools. Without urgent action, the situation will likely get worse as the region faces a rising demand for education due to a still-growing school-age population.

The education of the girl-child is a major priority. Across the sub-Saharan Africa region, 9 million girls between the ages of about 6 and 11 will never go to school at all, compared to 6 million boys, according to UIS data. Their disadvantage starts early: 23% of girls are out of primary school compared to 19% of boys. By the time they become adolescents, the exclusion rate for girls is 36% compared to 32% for boys<sup>35</sup>. To further show the level of deterioration of education in sub-Saharan Africa, the data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics on out of school children shows the following: Central Africa has 13,000,000, which is 13% of the whole of Africa; East Africa has 36,000,000, 34%; Northern Africa has 3,000,000, 3%; Southern Africa has 10,000,000, 11% and Western Africa has 42,000,000, 40%.

## **Conclusion**

What constitutes human dignity has specific features in different cultures. However, in the midst of this diversity of perspectives, there exists a core concept of human dignity, which is rooted in the unconditional value of a human being as well as in universal values widely recognized across cultures and faiths. It is on this basis that this work has been able to make a connection between education and the pursuance of human

dignity. The universality of the concept of education, despite its particularities allows education to focus on the universal principles of human dignity while also respecting and incorporating cultural nuances. Education is able to go beyond peculiarities and particularities as a result of its focus on critical thinking, self-awareness. This creates a sound balance in the connection between education and human dignity.

The strong belief of this paper that there is a very strong connection between education and human dignity is anchored on the understanding that wherever you find that people are well educated, in terms of the greater number of the population, there is always a greater respect for the dignity of the human person; there is, therefore, always a greater respect for life<sup>36</sup>. This is reinforced by the data on educational exclusion in sub-Saharan Africa. It further points to the need for a greater effort towards the education of the African child, given that the denial of education to this important population of the African people will not only affect the dignity of the African child but also the promotion of the philosophy of human dignity among the future generation of the African people.

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<sup>35</sup>UNESCO, Education in Africa.UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

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