

Philosophy of Education: Different Views of Different Scholars

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Abstract

Your educational philosophy is your beliefs about why, what and how you teach, whom you teach, and about the nature of learning. It is a set of principles that guides professional action through the events and issues teachers face daily. Sources for your educational philosophy are your life experiences, your values, the environment in which you live, interactions with others and awareness of philosophical approaches. Learning about the branches of philosophy, philosophical world views, and different educational philosophies and theories will help you to determine and shape your own educational philosophy, combined with these other aspects. There are different views about the method of education. In this article, we will discuss about that.

Keywords: Tagore; Education; Aim; Different Method; Philosophy.

1. Introduction

Philosophy means "love of wisdom." It is made up of two Greek words, *philo*, meaning love, and *sophos*, meaning wisdom. Philosophy helps teachers to reflect on key issues and concepts in education, usually through such questions as: What is being educated? What is the good life? What is knowledge? What is the nature of learning? And What is teaching? Philosophers think about the meaning of things and interpretation of that meaning. Even simple statements, such as "What should be learned? Or What is adolescence?" set up raging debates that can have major implications. For example, what happens if an adolescent commits a serious crime? One interpretation may hide another.

2. Different Views of Education

Philosophy of education, philosophical reflection on the nature, aims, and problems of education. The philosophy of education is Janus-faced, looking both inward to the parent discipline of philosophy and outward to educational practice. (In this respect it is like other areas of "applied" philosophy, such as the philosophy of law, the philosophy of science, and the philosophy of medicine, including bioethics.) This dual focus requires it to work on both sides of the traditional divide between theory and practice, taking as its subject matter both basic philosophical issues (e.g., the nature of knowledge) and more specific issues arising from educational practice (e.g., the desirability of standardized testing). These practical issues in turn have implications for a variety of long-standing philosophical problems in epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy. In addressing these many issues and problems, the philosopher of education strives for conceptual clarity, argumentative rigor, and informed valuation.

3. Aristotle's View

Plato's student Aristotle also took the highest aim of education to be the fostering of good judgment or wisdom, but he was more optimistic than Plato about the ability of the typical student to achieve it. He also emphasized the fostering of moral virtue and the development of character; his emphasis on virtue and his insistence that virtues develop in the context of community-guided practice—and that the rights and interests of individual citizens do not always outweigh those of the community—are reflected in contemporary interest in "virtue theory" in ethics and "communitarianism" in political philosophy.

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and His View

He famously insisted that formal education, like society itself, is inevitably corrupting; he argued that education should enable the "natural" and "free" development of children, a view that eventually led to the modern movement known as "open education." These ideas are in some ways reflected in 20th-century "progressivism," a movement often (but not always accurately) associated with Dewey. Unlike Plato,

Rousseau also prescribed fundamentally distinct educations for boys and girls, and in doing so he raised issues concerning gender and its place in education that are of central concern today. Dewey emphasized the educational centrality of experience and held that experience is genuinely educational only when it leads to “growth.” But the idea that the aim of education is growth has proved to be a problematic and controversial one, and even the meaning of the slogan is unclear. Dewey also emphasized the importance of the student’s own interests in determining appropriate educational activities and ends-in-view; in this respect he is usually seen as a proponent of “child-centered” education, though he also stressed the importance of students’ understanding of traditional subject matter. While these Deweyan themes are strongly reminiscent of Rousseau, Dewey placed them in a far more sophisticated—albeit philosophically contentious—context. He emphasized the central importance of education for the health of democratic social and political institutions, and he developed his educational and political views from a foundation of systematic metaphysics and epistemology.

5. Different Viewpoints on Education

5.1 Idealism

Idealism is a philosophical approach that has as its central tenet that ideas are the only true reality, the only thing worth knowing. In a search for truth, beauty, and justice that is enduring and everlasting, the focus is on conscious reasoning in the mind. Plato, father of Idealism, espoused this view about 400 years BC, in his famous book, *The Republic*. Plato believed that there are two worlds. The first is the spiritual or mental world, which is eternal, permanent, orderly, regular, and universal. There is also the world of appearance, the world experienced through sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound, that is changing, imperfect, and disorderly. This division is often referred to as the duality of mind and body. Reacting against what he perceived as too much of a focus on the immediacy of the physical and sensory world, Plato described a utopian society in which "education to body and soul all the beauty and perfection of which they are capable" as an ideal. In his allegory of the cave, the shadows of the sensory world must be overcome with the light of reason or universal truth. To understand truth, one must pursue knowledge and identify with the Absolute Mind. Plato also believed that the soul is fully formed prior to birth and is perfect and at one with the Universal Being. The birth process checks this perfection, so education requires bringing latent ideas (fully formed concepts) to consciousness.

In idealism, the aim of education is to discover and develop each individual's abilities and full moral excellence in order to better serve society. The curricular emphasis is subject matter of mind: literature, history, philosophy, and religion. Teaching methods focus on handling ideas through lecture, discussion, and Socratic dialogue (a method of teaching that uses questioning to help students discover and clarify knowledge).

Introspection, intuition, insight, and whole-part logic are used to bring to consciousness the forms or concepts which are latent in the mind. Character is developed through imitating examples and heroes.

5.2 Realism

Realists believe that reality exists independent of the human mind. The ultimate reality is the world of physical objects. The focus is on the body/objects. Truth is objective-what can be observed. Aristotle, a student of Plato who broke with his mentor's idealist philosophy, is called the father of both Realism and the scientific method. In this metaphysical view, the aim is to understand objective reality through "the diligent and unsparing scrutiny of all observable data." Aristotle believed that to understand an object, its ultimate form had to be understood, which does not change. For example, a rose exists whether or not a person is aware of it. A rose can exist in the mind without being physically present, but ultimately, the rose shares properties with all other roses and flowers (its form), although one rose may be red and another peach colored. Aristotle also was the first to teach logic as a formal discipline in order to be able to reason about physical events and aspects. The exercise of rational thought is viewed as the ultimate purpose for humankind. The Realist curriculum emphasizes the subject matter of the physical world, particularly science and mathematics. The teacher organizes and presents content systematically within a discipline, demonstrating use of criteria in making decisions. Teaching methods focus on mastery of facts and basic skills through demonstration and recitation. Students must also demonstrate the ability to think critically and scientifically, using observation and experimentation. Curriculum should be scientifically approached, standardized, and distinct-discipline based. Character is developed through training in the rules of conduct.

5.3 Pragmatism (Experientialism)

For pragmatists, only those things that are experienced or observed are real. In this late 19th century American philosophy, the focus is on the reality of experience. Unlike the Realists and Rationalists, Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly changing and that we learn best through applying our experiences and thoughts to problems, as they arise. The universe is dynamic and evolving, a "becoming" view of the world. There is no absolute and unchanging truth, but rather, truth is what works. Pragmatism is derived from the teaching of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), who believed that thought must produce action, rather than linger in the mind and lead to indecisiveness.

John Dewey (1859-1952) applied pragmatist philosophy in his progressive approaches. He believed that learners must adapt to each other and to their environment. Schools should emphasize the subject matter of social experience. All learning is dependent on the context of place, time, and circumstance. Different cultural and ethnic groups learn to work cooperatively and contribute to a democratic society. The ultimate purpose is

the creation of a new social order. Character development is based on making group decisions in light of consequences.

For Pragmatists, teaching methods focus on hands-on problem solving, experimenting, and projects, often having students work in groups. Curriculum should bring the disciplines together to focus on solving problems in an interdisciplinary way. Rather than passing down organized bodies of knowledge to new learners, Pragmatists believe that learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental inquiry. This prepares students for citizenship, daily living, and future careers.

5.4 Existentialism

The nature of reality for Existentialists is subjective, and lies within the individual. The physical world has no inherent meaning outside of human existence. Individual choice and individual standards rather than external standards are central. Existence comes before any definition of what we are. We define ourselves in relationship to that existence by the choices we make. We should not accept anyone else's predetermined philosophical system; rather, we must take responsibility for deciding who we are. The focus is on freedom, the development of authentic individuals, as we make meaning of our lives.

There are several different orientations within the existentialist philosophy. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish minister and philosopher, is considered to be the founder of existentialism. His was a Christian orientation. Another group of existentialists, largely European, believes that we must recognize the finiteness of our lives on this small and fragile planet, rather than believing in salvation through God. Our existence is not guaranteed in an afterlife, so there is tension about life and the certainty of death, of hope or despair. Unlike the more austere European approaches where the universe is seen as meaningless when faced with the certainty of the end of existence, American existentialists have focused more on human potential and the quest for personal meaning. Values clarification is an outgrowth of this movement. Following the bleak period of World War II, the French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, suggested that for youth, the existential moment arises when young people realize for the first time that choice is theirs, that they are responsible for themselves. Their question becomes "Who am I and what should I do?"

Related to education, the subject matter of existentialist classrooms should be a matter of personal choice. Teachers view the individual as an entity within a social context in which the learner must confront others' views to clarify his or her own. Character development emphasizes individual responsibility for decisions. Real answers come from within the individual, not from outside authority. Examining life through authentic thinking involves students in genuine learning experiences. Existentialists are opposed to thinking about students as objects to be measured, tracked, or standardized. Such educators want the educational experience

to focus on creating opportunities for self-direction and self-actualization. They start with the student, rather than on curriculum content.

6. Philosophy of Education According To Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Asia's first Nobel Laureate, was born into a prominent Calcutta family known for its socio-religious and cultural innovations during the 19th Bengal Renaissance. The profound social and cultural involvement of his family would later play a strong role in the formulation of Rabindranath's educational priorities. His grandfather Dwarkanath was involved in supporting medical facilities, educational institutions and the arts, and he fought for religious and social reform and the establishment of a free press. His father was also a leader in social and religious reform, who encouraged a multi-cultural exchange in the family mansion Jorasanko. Within the joint family, Rabindranath's thirteen brothers and sisters were mathematicians, journalists, novelists, musicians, artists. His cousins, who shared the family mansion, were leaders in theatre, science and a new art movement.

His experiences at Jorasanko provided him with a lifelong conviction concerning the importance of freedom in education. He also realized in a profound manner the importance of the arts for developing empathy and sensitivity, and the necessity for an intimate relationship with one's cultural and natural environment. In participating in the cosmopolitan activities of the family, he came to reject narrowness in general, and in particular, any form of narrowness that separated human being from human being. He saw education as a vehicle for appreciating the richest aspects of other cultures, while maintaining one's own cultural specificity.

7. Aims of Education According to Tagore

The aims of education as reflected in educational institution founded by Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan are as follows:

(1) Self Realization

Spiritualism is the essence of humanism; this concept has been reflected in Tagore's educational philosophy. Self-realization is an important aim of education. Manifestation of personality depends upon the self-realization and spiritual knowledge of individual.

(2) Intellectual Development

Tagore also greatly emphasized the intellectual development of the child. By intellectual development he means development of imagination, creative free thinking, constant curiosity and alertness of the mind. Child should be free to adopt his own way learning which will lead to all round development.

(3) Physical Development

Tagore's educational philosophy also aims at the physical development of the child. He gave much importance to sound and healthy physique. There were different kinds of exercises. Yoga, games & sports prescribed in Santiniketan as an integral part of the education system.

(4) Love for humanity

Tagore held that the entire universe is one family. Education can teach people to realize oneness of the globe. Education for international understanding and universal brotherhood is another important aim of his educational philosophy. The feeling of oneness can be developed through the concepts like fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man all creatures are equal on this earth.

(5) Establishment of relationship between man & God

Man bears the diverse qualities and potentialities offered by God. These qualities are inborn and innate. The relationship between man and God is strong and permanent. However the dedication to spiritualism and sacredness will lead to the harmonious relationship with man, nature and God.

(6) Freedom

Freedom is considered as an integral aspect of human development. Education is a man-making process, it explores the innate power exists within the man. It is not an imposition rather a liberal process that provides utmost freedom to the individual for his all-round development. He says, Education has meaning only when it is imparted through the path of freedom".

(7) Co-relation of Objects

Co-relation exists with God, man and nature. A peaceful world is only possible when correlation between man and nature will be established.

(8) Mother tongue as the medium of Instruction

Language is the true vehicle of self-expression. Man can freely express his thought in his mother-tongue. Tagore has emphasized mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the child's education.

(9) Moral and Spiritual Development

Tagore emphasized moral and spiritual training in his educational thought. Moral and spiritual education is more important than bookish knowledge for an integral development of human personality. There must be an adequate provision for the development of selfless activities, co-operation and love fellow feeling and sharing among the students in educational institutions.

(10) Social Development

According to Tagore, "Brahma" the supreme soul manifests himself through men and other creatures. Since He is the source of all human-beings and creatures, so all are equal. Rabindranath Tagore therefore said, "service to man is service to god". All should develop social relationship and fellow-feeling from the beginnings of one's life. Education aims at developing the individual personality as well as social characters which enables him to live as a worthy being.

Rabindranath Tagore believed that the aim of education is self-realization. He himself was a poet and a saint, who had, through his imagination and insight, realized the universal soul in himself and in nature. He believed that this realization was the goal of education. Because the universal soul is the root of our own soul, man's aim in life is to reach that universal soul of which all human beings are parts. The evolution of nature is consciously or unconsciously driving us towards this universal soul, a process that can be assisted by education. Even if it is not assisted, the progress towards the universal soul will continue, but then individuals will be deprived of self-realization. It is thus evident that Rabindranath educational philosophy is an adjunct of his general philosophy of life. He believed that every human being is one who has potentialities of progressing towards the Super human being, the universal soul. His conception of the universal soul bore clear imprint of the Gita and Upanishadic philosophies.

There are four fundamental principles in Tagore's educational philosophy; naturalism, humanism, internationalism and idealism. Shantiniketan and Visva Bharathi are both based on these very principles.

He insisted that education should be imparted in a natural surroundings. He believed in giving children the freedom of expression. He said, "Children have their active subconscious mind which like a tree has the power to gather its food from the surrounding atmosphere". He also said that an educational institution should not be "a dead cage in which living minds are fed with food that's artificially prepared. Hand work and arts are the spontaneous over flow of our deeper nature and spiritual significance".

According to him, "Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of dust and gives us wealth not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love. It is a process of enlightenment. It is divine wealth. It helps in realization of truth".

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The aim of education is to bring about perfection of man by dispelling ignorance and ushering in the light of knowledge. It should enable us to lead a complete life – economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual.

The main objective of his school – Shantiniketan was to cultivate a love for nature, to impart knowledge and wisdom in one's native language, provide freedom of mind, heart and will, a natural ambience, and to eventually enrich Indian culture.

For Tagore, religion was an ideal. His 'Visva Bharathi World University' stood for his nobility of soul. In the pamphlet named 'The Centre of Indian Culture', the poet expresses the ideals of Visva Bharathi.

There he writes, 'In education, the most inspiring atmosphere of creative activity is important. Primary function of the institution must be constructive; scope must be for all kinds of intellectual exploration. Teaching must be one with culture, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, economic and social. True education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have an organic connection with our surroundings'.

Tagore says, "We should know that the great task of our institution is to provide for the education of the mind and all the senses through various activities".

Referring to religion, Rabindranath Tagore likens an educational institution to 'a wide meeting place where all sects may gather together and forget their differences'. In the memorandum of association of the Visva Bharati, Tagore writes the objectives as, "To study the mind of man in its realization of different aspects of truth from diverse points of view, the culture of Visva Bharati is the culture of man and its keynote lies in the truth that human personality is not a mean trifle, it is also the Divine personality".

He also lays emphasis on the learner's contact with nature. Apart from physical activity, nature teaches a man more than any institution. Educational institutions should realize the importance of this fact and inculcate co-curricular activities to good effect.

Tagore believes that, one of the main aims of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the nation and education stands for human regeneration, cultural representation, harmony and intellectualism. Educational institutions should build on the power of thinking and imagination in an individual and help turn herself/himself into a self-sustained building block of human society and a creative canvas of nation on the whole.

To quote Tagore: "A day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost heritage".

Let us hope that the same quote applies to our Indian education system. Tagore's foresight on natural environment as background to child's education is much needed at present because of the lack of breathing

space in the current school curriculum. A child is bogged down to amass grades and marks throughout its schooling, which also builds pressure on the parents. Not to even mention school fees that are shooting through the roof, the present schooling gives lesser importance to the well-being of a child. We have reached the point where most schools are run without even playgrounds. If we keep tripping without trying to learn from failures, we might end up with a dislike for the very process of walking, and thereby miss all the pleasures of the gift of evolution. Shifted preferences, politics, socio-economic degradation of the nation is terribly reflecting on our education system. It is high time we took notice and did something.

Universities to integrate themselves with society and make an effort to educate people living in the countryside. He did not want education to remain confined to the cities and to particular classes of society.

8. Conclusion

Education is essential in life. Starting from birth, we learn to breathe, to walk, to talk, to crawl, how to treat other people, to remember our manners... but the real education process begins in the primary school. Everything we do is a learning process, whether it is an easy task that we do in everyday life, to something more difficult. We always learn how to overcome whatever comes our way. Education is a huge part of this and the reason why I value it.

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