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EDUCATION IS A MORAL CONCEPT

OBRAZOVANJE JE MORALNI POJAM

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Abstract

All knowledge is informative, but education is not there only to take part simply in reflecting social values. Education predominantly refers to the initiation into what is worthwhile with the provision that the transmitted content will be taught in a morally unobjectionable way. That is, education must involve some normative aspects, which can give it a purpose, ensuring that the involved parties will preserve the moral autonomy of the involved agents. Therefore education is a sort of communication that defines the role of individual in a particular society. The paper draws a clear division between coercive aspect of education, and moral aspect of education. In order to develop rationality and avoid partial and hence repressive social influences, education should enhance personal integrity and challenge the student's independent mind. Since education and indoctrination cannot be distinguished by their methods, they must be distinguished by their aims. Education needs to maintain the approach to combat the indoctrinators' attempts to control the knowledge production systems in a way, which serves their interests as distinct from the public's.

Introduction

Education is not a subject in any simple sense because it deals with knowledge that is being created to explain the world we live in. Since both: teachers and learners are autonomous, morally equal rational beings, every explanation includes both sides taking an active part. Therefore the purpose of education varies widely due to diversities in culture and in the political system, so the discussion upon education does not include only its technical aspects, but predominantly its aims and principles. Education is not a fact, but a process, and it must be reconsidered regarding learning styles and teaching methods because some of them are unacceptable. When the ways of knowing start to differ regarding the scope of instrumental and intrinsic good obtained within the institution, it becomes a moral issue! It is particularly true when rationality, impartiality and justice come into question.

Rational Foundation of Education

To be involved in education (whether as a teacher or as a learner) means to participate in the "socio-political field" because the society we live in shapes the nature of institutions that would serve it best. Some experts illustrate that men dress their children's minds as they do their bodies, in the prevailing fashion! In this respect education is conceived as an activity which brings the individual member to come into harmony with the proposed ideal of a society. Therefore education always presupposes an ideal of a person to which it is leading, or some logically implied set of values of a society for which the education prepares its individual members. This is the reason why current discussion

Sažetak

Svako znanje je informativno, ali obrazovanje ne postoji jedino zato da bi samo odrazilo društvene vrijednosti. Obrazovanje se prvenstveno odnosi na uvođenje u ono što je vrijedno pod uvjetom da se transmitirani sadržaj uči na moralno prihvatljiv način. To znači da obrazovanje mora uključiti i normativne aspekte koji mu daju svrhu, te osigurati da će upletene strane očuvati svoju moralnu autonomnost. Zato je obrazovanje vrsta komunikacije koja definira ulogu pojedinca u društvu. Referat jasno razlikuje nasilni aspekt obrazovanja od moralnog aspekta obrazovanja. Kako bi se razvila racionalnost te izbjegla pristranost pa prema tome i represivni društveni utjecaj, obrazovanje treba pridonijeti rastu integriteta i oformljenju neovisnosti duha. Budući da se obrazovanje od indoktrinacije ne može razlikovati po metodi, mora se razlikovati po ciljevima. Obrazovanje treba podržavati takav pristup koji će se suprotstavljati pokušajima indoktrinatora da kontrolira sustave stvaranja znanja na način koji služi njihovim interesima za razliku od interesa javnosti.

on education includes a debate not only on its technical aspects, but specifically on sorts of ideals that can give the education its purpose!

A. C. MacInty reclaims that conventional phrases like: "the public interest", "the welfare" and "the interest of the community" in fact present a socially accepted criterion of action. Therefore, such criterion remains extrinsic to the action itself. Professions are forms of work devoted to the public good, and they contribute to preparation for significant work! But public good depends on the development that should be the result of the creative involvement of all agents. Nevertheless, social morality is not the only morality, and given ends and purposes can be reasonable and satisfying not simply if they comply to the current social morality, but exclusively if they do not stop the growth in students of the capacity to think for themselves about standards of rationality! Some authors emphasize, true knowledge is precious since it leads to more comprehensive and meaningful explanations than we possess today.

Alan Harris rightfully emphasizes that there is a sharp contrast between the educational ideals of a democracy and those of a totalitarian state. The former, at least in principle, placing value on freedom of political thinking, and contributing to all-round growth of every member of society – the latter valuing uncritical loyalty and the subservience of the individual desires to the welfare of the "State".

Educational ideals of a democracy offer forms of culture that can create the free and equal citizens in whose name it rules. As the progress of the western world has been equated with dimensions of modern support to the individual, personal autonomy is

conceived to be “the duty to maximize the individual’s right to make decisions” This means that only clear notion of the function of the state can produce a pretty clear view of the education its citizens ought to acquire in order to obtain desired identities.

In a totalitarian state virtues are shaped in terms of particular community membership and identities obtained within a family, ethnic, class, or religious life are considered to be sufficient to produce identities consistent with the authority of the regime. Hiding relevant information from citizens, lowering integrity of the public sphere, and preventing its citizens from carrying out the duty to make relevant choices is very common in a static society! So in totalitarianism individuals are not challenged to develop integrity! Wilhelm von Humboldt illustrated such sort of culture as attacking the “inner life of the soul, in which the individuality of human beings essentially consists”. Since individuality of human beings is possessed only by human beings, it must be possessed equally by all! Civic education is the shield against irrational or immoral distinguishing among persons. If education is to take an active part in shaping the complexity of challenges to our economic, social, cultural, and natural environment, it must reexamine the system’s values and their implications!

Education can escape from misconceiving its purpose only by allowing its core assumptions to be challenged. That is, excellence in education must exist on the foundations of values, knowing right from wrong, and appreciating the principle of moral equality for all men. But if the political and economic system will hold a dominant position in determining the ideological goal of the society, than education can virtually turn into a parasitic activity!

Education implies Training and Training does not imply Education

Education at all levels tends to be strongly conservative. Wiseman considers that this is perhaps inevitable, since one of education’s primary aims has been, and must continue to be the conservation of the best of the past. Such a tendency, however, carries within it the danger that the system may also conserve elements that are less than the best and in particular, elements which once were relevant but which, in the modern world and radically changed social environment serve needs which no longer exist or are aimed at goals which became transformed.

In search for a schooling model with a more adequate account of the relationship between education, the economy, and the society while elaborating what is good in education, theories that deal with it do not always clearly identify the distinction to which education should give priority:

- (a) To job training (fitting the practical requirements of business), or
 - (b) To developing student’s capacity to be creative.
- (a) The claim in which education is viewed as stemming solely from the term “educare” (to train) would be more or less equated with upbringing. John Wilson (from the Department of Educational Studies, Oxford University) exposed his view on the difference between a trained teacher and an educated teacher: both kinds of learning may benefit the teacher and his pupils. The difference is rather that the notion of education covers more ground, or takes more things into consideration, than the notion of training. That is, experience tells us only about the way things are, and not the way things ought to be! If businesses put emphasis on patterns of authority instead of control, the schools will foster and reward obedience

and rule-following, and prepare students for the same sort of discipline, they will later experience in their jobs. The idea of such training fits the best to the image of pre-industrial era “occupations”.

- (b) Education definitely referees to the term “educere” (to lead out), because it enhances individual’s expertise. It encourages realization of individual potentialities. In other words, education’s goal is to produce an independent mind, and learn to be a person. Accordingly, good society will be a society of fully developed persons with their unique freedom and responsibility who will be capable to transmit knowledge and understanding into society in a morally acceptable manner.

Evaluative Aspects in Education

According to Cornel M. Hamm & L. B. Daniels education is a normative concept because it implies the conceptual connection between education and what is valuable. This means that within formal education no instructor can avoid making value judgments and this task involves such forms of knowledge that are themselves fundamentally evaluative.

Richard S. Peters reminds us, the conviction that an educator must have aims is generated by the concept of “education” itself, because to speak about education is to commit oneself to a judgment of value.

Yet, any definition that would leave out the social and political prospective of education, but would match only the scope of understanding and enhancing values of the inherited culture, will be conservative and thus ideological! That is, authoritarian regimes have a very strong political interest to maintain “static” moral ideals of education, generated by particularistic world-views, and give priority to the goals of specific groups. This is the reason why the static society does not clearly distinguish instrumental (extrinsic) values from profound (intrinsic) values.

Educational aims must not remain static; they should imply a discussion about values, turning individuals into integrated, autonomous adults. This is important because only those who are integrated and autonomous are able to judge what is good and therefore right, without justification for authority or force. That is the reason why education should provide the development of rationality in students who are required to exert the critical reappraisal of events and activities. Rationality itself is the virtue because the rational person is consistent in thought and in action, able to recognize the connection between different ideas and qualify some of them as being true, while some others as being false. Rationality is an essential aspect of human dignity because it can contribute the broader community influencing humanity flourish at the social level too.

As T. F. Daveney stated, the educational system embraces the correspondence between the purpose of education and society’s own purpose. In his view, the educational debate is a debate about society. Although the concept of moral autonomy particularly by Kant, refers primarily to the individual person who gain integrity, in the view of some experts this notion can be extended to the logical autonomy of moral discourse. That is, reflective morality implies investigation of the core essence of moral reasoning and its logical implications, and enables the man to attain possible objective moral reasoning standpoint!

That is why arguments about the purpose of education differ widely in accordance with views about the level of objectivity in particular judgment, regarding the quest for sort of society that ought to exist. As the students are the segment of the population

who potentially articulate public opinion, being detached of the normative aspect of education, they will spread the idea that matters of value are relative, arbitrary and conventional.

Formal and Informal Education

The socio-political aspect of the academic environment is present in a particular society in the extent the students are expected to express both: critical opinions on works they are master, as well as their presuppositions in the areas they do not yet fully master. If the students have been trained through second-hand information and methodology, they will feed back third-hand critical opinions. This indicates that their criticism will not be only poor, but in circumstances students will also fail to achieve the positive utilitarian use of knowledge.

Education is commonly considered valuable in extrinsic terms for both, the individual (he will get a better job), and for the society (the society will develop good citizens).

But education should also be conceived in intrinsic terms. That is, as Langfordforges, in formal education two parties may be distinguished, one of whom, the teacher, accepts responsibility for the education of the other. On the other hand, informal education is defined negatively as education in which this condition is not met, and the word education is left undefined. So, the person who lacks formal education will also lack the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in all its virtual forms and aspects. On the contrary, formally educated person is expected to recognize if half-truth has been taught instead of whole truth. The person whose extensive knowledge goes beyond the facts, will be capable to identify clearly if only one decisive point of view is given, or if other possible points of view are suppressed. Such extensive knowledge could not be the result of training solely because training instructs only about facts! The extensive knowledge is the sort of experience that has the profound evaluative character and this is the reason why the attainment of extensive knowledge must be the exclusive result of education! It referees to the understanding of the very nature of education, implying the courage to challenge impartiality and corruption! Strong values can override the fear of those who do not act because they are preoccupied with self-interest. The egotistic fear inspires no one and changes nothing!

Learning Styles and Ways of Knowing

As many experts claim, if human beings were defined in biological terms only, then nobody would need education. It is obvious that human beings come into existence by being born. In the biological sense humans grow automatically, habits acquired in their primary communities would satisfy them and they will not seek education. Yet, if human beings were defined in cultural terms then new-born babies will not be viewed strictly as persons in the relevant sense, though they normally possess the capacity to become persons; they will have to learn to be persons. It is this fact which provides the scope and need for education. Since learning takes time it follows that the process of becoming a person requires the learner's progress through some major categories of knowing. William Perry was the first to establish four classic stages of cognitive development. According to his research, learners pass through these four categories of knowing:

- (1) Dualistic – viewing the world in terms of right or wrong /with experts holding the right answers/ – the student is intimidated by his instructors because he sees them as external authorities who hold the answers;

- (2) Problematic – everything is uncertain, nobody knows what right is;
- (3) Relativist – knowledge is contextual and subjective, based on intuition rather than on evidence;
- (4) Commitment – personalized set of values and identity. An autonomous agent will strive for rationality and impartiality. As partiality refers to ignoring what justice demands and favoring someone or something above others, rational person will be courageous and determine what the truth is! Rationality and impartiality are ideals that have been constantly used in all our assessments, and therefore they are central criteria for protecting an individual from intrusions, and protecting society against the productivity lost (when individuals are not given a fair opportunity to develop their skills and talents).

Some authors consider that “judgment” is the tacit and implicit component of knowledge, the ingredient which is not merely unspecified in propositions but is UNSPECIFIABLE in propositions. It is the component of knowledge, which does not appear in the form of rules and this is the reason why it cannot be resolved into information or itemized in the manner characteristic of information. Various psychological, emotional, and developmental conditions shape the way a person approaches a learning task and therefore judgment must be related to the view of how the learner understands what knowledge is.

Cross and Steadman (1996) suggest that instructors can induce higher-order processing, not by explaining, but by providing an environment that “demands active learning” and introducing cognitive conflict (looking at things through different perspectives) through instructional delivery methods.

Some authors propose that the distinction between “information” and “judgment” is a distinction between different manners of communication rather than a dichotomy in what is known. This distinction springs from reflecting upon teaching and learning rather than from reflecting the nature of knowledge. Since education has an instrumental potential in causing and directing social change, it, it must be conceived differently. Education definitely takes part in the determination of future social order and the question is not whether education should take a role in the production of future society, but whether its role will be irresponsible! This is the reason why education must not only reflect current values that already exist in the society, but it should introduce paradigms that help modify inappropriate practices!

If students were not encouraged to interpret the information or evaluate it critically in relation to their own experience, they will understand knowledge as something that someone else has, and they need only to collect it. Such view upon the way of knowing will encourage them simply to memorize facts and then restate them on tests. They will see the meaning of knowledge as being hidden within the text, or being held by an external authority. Learning will be assumed as the task of decoding information without connecting it to the previous knowledge or experience.

The construction of knowledge is the process in which teachers are facilitators who should broaden understanding of implicit studying models. Teachers are expected to explain how the different perspectives regarding knowledge that a person brings to the task of learning determine ways the learner attempts to understand. In this regard William Perry (1970) highlighted the importance of personal integrity in the process of acquiring knowledge. Hence, one among the most important aims of education is to attain the self.

How and Why Education deals with Morality?

Since the human right to enlighten the truth must be possessed by all human beings and only by human beings, it would be irrational to distinguish among persons, deny human equity and preserve the access to a good judgment only for the few. Rights entail objects and areas within which every human being is entitled to act without further permission. But arguments about the purpose of education still differ widely, due to the views about predominant values in particular society. In a liberal democratic order every citizen is at least in principle considered equal in his or her access to all kinds of knowledge. Obviously, without scientific education, the society cannot survive. Therefore, the advanced industrial world is rapidly gaining the authority as the source of unifying ideals. Since people disagree about the kind of educational system they wish to prevail, they would also disagree about what sort of society ought to exist. That is the reason why education appears to be a moral concept, or the concept of either right or wrong choice! For instance, a course can be of a very high intrinsic quality, but, – if judged merely by economic benefit, the same course can be of a very low quality. Therefore clear and not shifted criteria must be established about what students should be given in the scope of what is good for them by those who know, and not only of what students want. So education's purpose should be judged both, in terms of intrinsic quality, as opposed to terms of a temporary market demand.

The development in education and in business cannot be attained independently, as if formal education were not a part of the general public. When the system separates education from the general public (like authoritarian societies characterized by vertical communicating style in which the man rather than the task exerts the discipline), teachers will be unclear and uncertain of educational purposes. They will remain unable to shape a socially desirable direction of growth.

Character-building and intellectual maturity must presuppose a certain moral ideal, which is universal. The implication being that education is logically connected with moral ideals, and the concept of training is logically neutral with moral ideals. Training it is an empirical concept because it aims only at utility. Education aims at self-development, it deals with good judgment and assessment and therefore it goes beyond instrumental right and enhances both: utility and morality. Unfortunately, in every society education is also influenced by some irrational or repressive factors such as popular opinion, stereotypes, and local prejudices.

In Harrisview, education involves the whole personality, and training touches only the surface of the mind. The danger of thinking of the “static content” of education is that one may confuse the content with education itself. And teachers who concentrate on content rather than on education will instruct rather than educate.

Education versus Indoctrination

If the dominant focus of education will be challenge to stereotypes, irrationality, ignorance, prejudice, fixation of belief, and fanaticism, than its fundamental goal would be to produce the independence of mind. Accordingly, indoctrination would be the typical notion to be contrasted with.

Indoctrination occurs when we teach irrelevant features and avoid to challenge the core essence of the same issue. The content will indoctrinate in circumstances when it is presented in the wrong way, particularly regarding teaching methods, or if we are affected with the content much more than we wish to. The psychological aspect of unfair means and wrong methods

being used, affects the autonomy of a person as a rational being in the sense that any shift of his or her habits will result in the overwhelming feeling of guilt. To impose guilt means to interfere with autonomy of another person and lower his or her integrity. This sort of behavior is morally unacceptable since it prevents that person from acting and exerting human responsibility! To deprive another person from human rights must be qualified as criminal, immoral and illegitimate practice because it overrides the principle of moral equality for all men and instills obedience. The features of hierarchical order should lie far behind because an alternative option of rights based processes is available!

Who has the right to instill his own patterns of thinking into another person? Are other persons our means, or ends in themselves! Treating humans only as means instead as ends in themselves, violates the moral autonomy of the person. Respect for the ideas of another is the part of the respect for that person. The educator will present doctrines so that they are prepared not to be immune to refutation. Teaching and discussing questions that involve people's feelings, behavior, their choices and beliefs will develop and enlarge their personality much more than teaching neutral science. Therefore, in such matters whenever only one point of view is given, or other possible points of view are being suppressed, and the contrary evidence is available, indoctrination is likely to appear! Or, as Patricia Smart assumes, indoctrination can occur in every area of inquiry, except for elementary mathematics simply because other opinions are not evidently excluded by the available evidence. When evidence is absent or insufficient for the degree of belief accredited to it, the best way to avoid indoctrination is to offer reasons rather than rationalizations. In order to be justified, the beliefs must be rational and morally justified!

The responsibility of the teaching profession to avoid the negative influence of indoctrination and eradicate it from education relates predominantly to the development and enlargement of personality in students.

Patricia Smart reminds us that indoctrination might be described as the transmission of doctrines of which we are suspicious by teaching methods, and which we regard as morally objectionable. This means that indoctrination prevents other rational beings from being rational! Violating, denying, and overriding the proportion of moral equality for all rational beings lowers the ideal and brings the moral reason into question! No one, at least the teaching profession has the right to pass such irrationality to students because the teaching profession is not a mere instrument of the society, it has another mission, it is challenged to promote values, not vices!

Education covers a wider area than indoctrination because education challenges every individual to start thinking and forming his decisions. Sternberg rightfully assumes, what counts as morally right action depends on objectives! Richard Hare also states, the educator is hoping his students will start thinking and none of the thoughts that may occur to them will be labeled “dangerous” a priori. In his view education and indoctrination cannot be distinguished by their methods. They were distinguished by their aims; the educator is trying to turn children into adults; the indoctrinator is trying to make them into perpetual children and is ready to intervene and suppress their thoughts.

The given social order including law and custom contains social rules, which represent the coercive aspect of what is regarded “as a good life of the best possible life”. By contrast, a moral order for a society is an order, which actually accomplishes the purpose of education by forging people to self-development. It enhances rights of ordinary people to legitimately participate in social affairs. Every human being is capable to become morally autonomous, but without formal education it would

be very difficult to obtain an objective prospective for judging ideas and events. Still there is a consensus among philosophers that one of the most important goals of education should be the liberation of students from uncritical mental habits. Students cannot be expected to respect themselves as persons unless they have learned to utilize fully the intellectual and creative powers with which they are equipped. Yet, it is not likely that they will be critical in the civic sense if unaware of paternalistic biases. John Passmore reminds us, authoritarianism left its illegitimate influence on persons who are extremely critical, but only of those who do not fully adhere to their beliefs, rules, and modes of action.

Conclusion

Education might turn into parasitic activity if some other power such as political or economic system would determine its aims and purposes. Therefore those who create knowledge are required to offer their contribution within the institution and permanently reexamine the education's aims, principles, purposes, learning styles, and teaching methods. In the civic society treating a student with respect as a person is morally acceptable, and viewing a student as a means for instilling someone's arbitrary convictions, would be labeled as immoral. Since nobody is a person in a relevant sense until he or she enlarges his or her own personality and gains integrity, this fact justifies the need for education. Both, training and education are valuable, the distinction between the two stems out from the distinction between instrumental right, and intrinsic right. Hence, the choice occurs not between right and wrong, but between right and right! Yet, to combat partiality, irrationality and other repressive interests of the society, like totalitarianism and paternalism which lowers the integrity of both, the individual and the public sphere, values of education are superior.

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