

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

This is a summary of content which appears on the following website;

highered.mheducation.com/sites/0072877723/student_view0/chapter9

http://highered.mheducation.com/sites/0072877723/student_view0/chapter9/index.html

Wikipedia

What is a philosophy of education, and why should it be important to you? Behind every school and every teacher is a set of related beliefs--a philosophy of education--that influences what and how students are taught. A philosophy of education represents answers to questions about the purpose of schooling, a teacher's role, and what should be taught and by what methods.

How do teacher-centered philosophies of education differ from student-centered philosophies of education? Teacher-centered philosophies tend to be more authoritarian and conservative, and emphasize the values and knowledge that have survived through time. The major teacher-centered philosophies of education are essentialism and perennialism. Student-centered philosophies are more focused on individual needs, contemporary relevance, and preparing students for a changing future. School is seen as an institution that works with youth to improve society or help students realize their individuality. Progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism place the learner at the center of the educational process: Students and teachers work together on determining what should be learned and how best to learn it.

The MTT on cash-for-jobs have made two recommendations regarding a common vision for education and developing a broad-based philosophy for education in South Africa.

6.6 Recommendation for developing a common vision for education - Since the abolition of the apartheid-based ideology of 'Christian National Education', no philosophy or overall vision for the post 1994 Departments of Basic and Higher Education and Training has developed. Various important strands of thought underpinned the education struggle from the 1980s onwards, including People's Education for People's Power, Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and numbers of others. We have at present our Constitution, the Bill of Rights and crucial documents such as the Freedom Charter, but these admirable declarations do not provide a general and comprehensive vision of what education seeks to achieve in this country. The vision which an overall educational philosophy expresses should be the foundation of the education of teachers, the mission statements of schools and give coherence to the kind of education which should characterise this country. The task of developing such a vision or philosophy for education should be co-ordinated and funded by the DBE and the DHET with the participation of all teacher education institutions as well as a wide range of stakeholders including the Unions.

RECOMMENDATION 14: That the DBE and the DHET, with universities and other - stakeholders, including the unions, lead discussion aimed at developing a broad-based philosophy of education, consistent with our history and Constitution, which will underpin the education and training of educators and shape the practice of education in schools throughout South Africa. Behind every school and every teacher is a set of related beliefs--a philosophy of education--that influences what and how students are taught. A

philosophy of education represents answers to questions about the purpose of schooling, a teacher's role, and what should be taught and by what methods.

Philosophy of education can refer to either the academic field of applied philosophy or to one of any educational philosophies that promote a specific type or vision of education, and/or which examine the definition, goals and meaning of education. As an academic field, philosophy of education is "the philosophical study of education and its problems...its central subject matter is education, and its methods are those of philosophy". Philosophy of education can also be understood not as an academic discipline but as a normative educational theory that unifies pedagogy, curriculum, learning theory, and the purpose of education and is grounded in specific metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. These theories are also called educational philosophies. For example, a teacher might be said to follow a perennialist educational philosophy or to follow a perennialist philosophy of education.

The South African Constitution makes provision for the right of basic education. The policies of the ANC now includes the demand for free secondary and tertiary education. The underpinning value being that every citizen has access to a full education notwithstanding affordability. The South African Outcomes-based Curriculum and CAPS has a very clear underpinning set of values and educational philosophy. Education policy determined by the institutions of the state have both implied and explicit philosophy and values. The determination of a philosophy for the South African Education System is primarily a political activity and in the South Africa context part and partial of the transformation agenda. The recommendations made by the MTT may imply the lack of explicit philosophy and value. This however is not entirely true. Our education philosophy permeates our Constitution, our OBE curriculum and Educational policies albeit sublime. I agree with the MTT that the philosophy must be clarified and clear but doubt whether a broad-based philosophy is possible. With conservatism and radicalism as two polar opposites neoliberalism forms the grey in between – these three supra-structures are mutually exclusive and incompatible. Any attempt to seek a discourse on this matter will potentially divide more than it unite and the best is to infuse radical philosophy of education as a nuance of educational policy and practice.

IDEALISM

Plato's educational philosophy was grounded in his vision of the ideal Republic, wherein the individual was best served by being subordinated to a just society. He advocated removing children from their mothers' care and raising them as wards of the state, with great care being taken to differentiate children suitable to the various castes, the highest receiving the most education, so that they could act as guardians of the city and care for the less able. Education would be holistic, including facts, skills, physical discipline, and music and art, which he considered the highest form of endeavor.

Plato believed that talent was distributed non-genetically and thus must be found in children born in any social class. He built on this by insisting that those suitably gifted were to be trained by the state so that they might be qualified to assume the role of a ruling class. What this established was essentially a system of selective public education premised on the assumption that an educated minority of the population were, by virtue of their education (and inborn educability), sufficient for healthy governance.

Plato's writings contain some of the following ideas: Elementary education would be confined to the guardian class till the age of 18, followed by two years of compulsory military training and then by higher education for those who qualified. While elementary education made the soul responsive to the environment, higher education helped the soul to search for truth which illuminated it. Both boys and

girls receive the same kind of education. Elementary education consisted of music and gymnastics, designed to train and blend gentle and fierce qualities in the individual and create a harmonious person.

At the age of 20, a selection was made. The best students would take an advanced course in mathematics, geometry, astronomy and harmonics. The first course in the scheme of higher education would last for ten years. It would be for those who had a flair for science. At the age of 30 there would be another selection; those who qualified would study dialectics and metaphysics, logic and philosophy for the next five years. After accepting junior positions in the army for 15 years, a man would have completed his theoretical and practical education by the age of 50.

Immanuel Kant believed that education differs from training in that the former involves thinking whereas the latter does not. In addition to educating reason, of central importance to him was the development of character and teaching of moral maxims. Kant was a proponent of public education and of learning by doing.

REALISM

Only fragments of Aristotle's treatise On Education are still in existence. We thus know of his philosophy of education primarily through brief passages in other works. Aristotle considered human nature, habit and reason to be equally important forces to be cultivated in education. Thus, for example, he considered repetition to be a key tool to develop good habits. The teacher was to lead the student systematically; this differs, for example, from Socrates' emphasis on questioning his listeners to bring out their own ideas (though the comparison is perhaps incongruous since Socrates was dealing with adults).

Aristotle placed great emphasis on balancing the theoretical and practical aspects of subjects taught. Subjects he explicitly mentions as being important included reading, writing and mathematics; music; physical education; literature and history; and a wide range of sciences. He also mentioned the importance of play.

One of education's primary missions for Aristotle, perhaps it's most important, was to produce good and virtuous citizens for the polis. All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.

In the medieval Islamic world, an elementary school was known as a maktab, which dates back to at least the 10th century. Like madrasahs (which referred to higher education), a maktab was often attached to a mosque. In the 11th century, Ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in the West), wrote a chapter dealing with the maktab entitled "The Role of the Teacher in the Training and Upbringing of Children", as a guide to teachers working at maktab schools. He wrote that children can learn better if taught in classes instead of individual tuition from private tutors, and he gave a number of reasons for why this is the case, citing the value of competition and emulation among pupils as well as the usefulness of group discussions and debates. Ibn Sina described the curriculum of a maktab school in some detail, describing the curricula for two stages of education in a maktab school.

Ibn Sina wrote that children should be sent to a maktab school from the age of 6 and be taught primary education until they reach the age of 14. During which time, he wrote that they should be taught the Qur'an, Islamic metaphysics, language, literature, Islamic ethics, and manual skills (which could refer to a variety of practical skills).

Ibn Sina refers to the secondary education stage of maktab schooling as the period of specialization, when pupils should begin to acquire manual skills, regardless of their social status. He writes that children after the age of 14 should be given a choice to choose and specialize in subjects they have an interest in, whether it was reading, manual skills, literature, preaching, medicine, geometry, trade and commerce, craftsmanship, or any other subject or profession they would be interested in pursuing for a future career. He wrote that this was a transitional stage and that there needs to be flexibility regarding the age in which pupils graduate, as the student's emotional development and chosen subjects need to be taken into account.

The empiricist theory of 'tabula rasa' was also developed by Ibn Sina. He argued that the "human intellect at birth is rather like a tabula rasa, a pure potentiality that is actualized through education and comes to know" and that knowledge is attained through "empirical familiarity with objects in this world from which one abstracts universal concepts" which is developed through a "syllogistic method of reasoning; observations lead to prepositional statements, which when compounded lead to further abstract concepts." He further argued that the intellect itself "possesses levels of development from the material intellect (al-'aql al-hayulani), that potentiality that can acquire knowledge to the active intellect (al-'aql al-fa'il), the state of the human intellect in conjunction with the perfect source of knowledge." [8]

In the 12th century, the Andalusian-Arabian philosopher and novelist Ibn Tufail (known as "Abubacer" or "Ebn Tophail" in the West) demonstrated the empiricist theory of 'tabula rasa' as a thought experiment through his Arabic philosophical novel, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, in which he depicted the development of the mind of a feral child "from a tabula rasa to that of an adult, in complete isolation from society" on a desert island, through experience alone. The Latin translation of his philosophical novel, *Philosophus Autodidactus*, published by Edward Pococke the Younger in 1671, had an influence on John Locke's formulation of tabula rasa in "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding".

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding* Locke composed an outline on how to educate this mind in order to increase its powers and activity:

"The business of education is not, as I think, to make them perfect in any one of the sciences, but so to open and dispose their minds as may best make them capable of any, when they shall apply themselves to it."

"If men are for a long time accustomed only to one sort or method of thoughts, their minds grow stiff in it, and do not readily turn to another. It is therefore to give them this freedom, that I think they should be made to look into all sorts of knowledge, and exercise their understandings in so wide a variety and stock of knowledge. But I do not propose it as a variety and stock of knowledge, but a variety and freedom of thinking, as an increase of the powers and activity of the mind, not as an enlargement of its possessions."

Locke expressed the belief that education maketh the man, or, more fundamentally, that the mind is an "empty cabinet", with the statement, "I think I may say that of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."

Locke also wrote that "the little and almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies have very important and lasting consequences." [13] He argued that the "associations of ideas" that one makes when young are more important than those made later because they are the foundation of the self: they are, put differently, what first mark the tabula rasa. In his *Essay*, in which is introduced both of these concepts,

Locke warns against, for example, letting "a foolish maid" convince a child that "goblins and sprites" are associated with the night for "darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful ideas, and they shall be so joined, that he can no more bear the one than the other." [14]

"Associationism", as this theory would come to be called, exerted a powerful influence over eighteenth-century thought, particularly educational theory, as nearly every educational writer warned parents not to allow their children to develop negative associations. It also led to the development of psychology and other new disciplines with David Hartley's attempt to discover a biological mechanism for associationism in his *Observations on Man* (1749).

Rousseau, though he paid his respects to Plato's philosophy, rejected it as impractical due to the decayed state of society. Rousseau also had a different theory of human development; where Plato held that people are born with skills appropriate to different castes (though he did not regard these skills as being inherited), Rousseau held that there was one developmental process common to all humans. This was an intrinsic, natural process, of which the primary behavioral manifestation was curiosity. This differed from Locke's 'tabula rasa' in that it was an active process deriving from the child's nature, which drove the child to learn and adapt to its surroundings.

Rousseau wrote in his book *Emile* that all children are perfectly designed organisms, ready to learn from their surroundings so as to grow into virtuous adults, but due to the malign influence of corrupt society, they often fail to do so. Rousseau advocated an educational method which consisted of removing the child from society—for example, to a country home—and alternately conditioning him through changes to his environment and setting traps and puzzles for him to solve or overcome.

Rousseau was unusual in that he recognized and addressed the potential of a problem of legitimation for teaching. He advocated that adults always be truthful with children, and in particular that they never hide the fact that the basis for their authority in teaching was purely one of physical coercion: "I'm bigger than you." Once children reached the age of reason, at about 12, they would be engaged as free individuals in the ongoing process of their own.

He once said that a child should grow up without adult interference and that the child must be guided to suffer from the experience of the natural consequences of his own acts or behaviour. When he experiences the consequences of his own acts, he advises himself.

"Rousseau divides development into five stages (a book is devoted to each). Education in the first two stages seeks to the senses: only when *Émile* is about 12 does the tutor begin to work to develop his mind. Later, in Book 5, Rousseau examines the education of Sophie (whom *Émile* is to marry). Here he sets out what he sees as the essential differences that flow from sex. 'The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive' (*Everyman* edn: 322). From this difference comes a contrasting education. They are not to be brought up in ignorance and kept to housework: Nature means them to think, to will, to love to cultivate their minds as well as their persons; she puts these weapons in their hands to make up for their lack of strength and to enable them to direct the strength of men. They should learn many things, but only such things as suitable' (*Everyman* edn.: 327)." *Émile*

Scholasticism

The objective of medieval education was an overtly religious one, primarily concerned with uncovering transcendental truths that would lead a person back to God through a life of moral and religious choice (Kreeft 15). The vehicle by which these truths were uncovered was dialectic:

To the medieval mind, debate was a fine art, a serious science, and a fascinating entertainment, much more than it is to the modern mind, because the medievals believed, like Socrates, that dialectic could uncover truth. Thus a 'scholastic disputation' was not a personal contest in cleverness, nor was it 'sharing opinions'; it was a shared journey of discovery (Kreeft 14–15).

Pragmatism

In *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Dewey stated that education, in its broadest sense, is the means of the "social continuity of life" given the "primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group". Education is therefore a necessity, for "the life of the group goes on." [16] Dewey was a proponent of Educational Progressivism and was a relentless campaigner for reform of education, pointing out that the authoritarian, strict, pre-ordained knowledge approach of modern traditional education was too concerned with delivering knowledge, and not enough with understanding students' actual experiences.

Existentialist

The existentialist sees the world as one's personal subjectivity, where goodness, truth, and reality are individually defined. Reality is a world of existing, truth subjectively chosen, and goodness a matter of freedom. 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.[citation needed]

Critical theory

A Brazilian committed to the cause of educating the impoverished peasants of his nation and collaborating with them in the pursuit of their liberation from what he regarded as "oppression," Freire is best known for his attack on what he called the "banking concept of education," in which the student was viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher. Freire also suggests that a deep reciprocity be inserted into our notions of teacher and student; he comes close to suggesting that the teacher-student dichotomy be completely abolished, instead promoting the roles of the participants in the classroom as the teacher-student (a teacher who learns) and the student-teacher (a learner who teaches). In its early, strong form this kind of classroom has sometimes been criticized[by whom?] on the grounds that it can mask rather than overcome the teacher's authority.

Aspects of the Freirian philosophy have been highly influential in academic debates over "participatory development" and development more generally. Freire's emphasis on what he describes as "emancipation" through interactive participation has been used as a rationale for the participatory focus of development, as it is held that 'participation' in any form can lead to empowerment of poor or

marginalised groups. Freire was a proponent of critical pedagogy. "He participated in the import of European doctrines and ideas into Brazil, assimilated them to the needs of a specific socio-economic situation, and thus expanded and refocused them in a thought-provoking way"[3]

Normative educational philosophies

"Normative philosophies or theories of education may make use of the results of [philosophical thought] and of factual inquiries about human beings and the psychology of learning, but in any case they propound views about what education should be, what dispositions it should cultivate, why it ought to cultivate them, how and in whom it should do so, and what forms it should take. In a full-fledged philosophical normative theory of education, besides analysis of the sorts described, there will normally be propositions of the following kinds: Basic normative premises about what is good or right; Basic factual premises about humanity and the world; Conclusions, based on these two kinds of premises, about the dispositions education should foster; Further factual premises about such things as the psychology of learning and methods of teaching; and Further conclusions about such things as the methods that education should use."[2]

Perennialism

Perennialists believe that one should teach the things that one deems to be of everlasting importance to all people everywhere. They believe that the most important topics develop a person. Since details of fact change constantly, these cannot be the most important. Therefore, one should teach principles, not facts. Since people are human, one should teach first about humans, not machines or techniques. Since people are people first, and workers second if at all, one should teach liberal topics first, not vocational topics. The focus is primarily on teaching reasoning and wisdom rather than facts, the liberal arts rather than vocational training.

Progressivism

Educational progressivism is the belief that education must be based on the principle that humans are social animals who learn best in real-life activities with other people. Progressivists, like proponents of most educational theories, claim to rely on the best available scientific theories of learning. Most progressive educators believe that children learn as if they were scientists, following a process similar to John Dewey's model of learning: 1) Become aware of the problem. 2) Define the problem. 3) Propose hypotheses to solve it. 4) Evaluate the consequences of the hypotheses from one's past experience. 5) Test the likeliest solution.[4]

Jean Piaget was a Swiss developmental psychologist known for his epistemological studies with children. His theory of cognitive development and epistemological view are together called "genetic epistemology". Piaget placed great importance on the education of children. As the Director of the International Bureau of Education, he declared in 1934 that "only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse, whether violent, or gradual."[20] Piaget created the International Centre for Genetic Epistemology in Geneva in 1955 and directed it until 1980. According to Ernst von Glasersfeld, Jean Piaget is "the great pioneer of the constructivist theory of knowing."[21]

Jean Piaget described himself as an epistemologist, interested in the process of the qualitative development of knowledge. As he says in the introduction of his book "Genetic Epistemology" (ISBN 978-0-393-00596-7): "What the genetic epistemology proposes is discovering the roots of the different

varieties of knowledge, since its elementary forms, following to the next levels, including also the scientific knowledge."

Another important contributor to the inquiry method in education is Bruner. His books *The Process of Education* and *Toward a Theory of Instruction* are landmarks in conceptualizing learning and curriculum development. He argued that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. This notion was an underpinning for his concept of the spiral curriculum which posited the idea that a curriculum should revisit basic ideas, building on them until the student had grasped the full formal concept. He emphasized intuition as a neglected but essential feature of productive thinking. He felt that interest in the material being learned was the best stimulus for learning rather than external motivation such as grades. Bruner developed the concept of discovery learning which promoted learning as a process of constructing new ideas based on current or past knowledge. Students are encouraged to discover facts and relationships and continually build on what they already know.

Essentialism

Educational essentialism is an educational philosophy whose adherents believe that children should learn the traditional basic subjects and that these should be learned thoroughly and rigorously. An essentialist program normally teaches children progressively, from less complex skills to more complex.

Social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action." Based in Marxist theory, critical pedagogy draws on radical democracy, anarchism, feminism, and other movements for social justice.

Maria Montessori

The Montessori method arose from Dr. Maria Montessori's discovery of what she referred to as "the child's true normal nature" in 1907,[22] which happened in the process of her experimental observation of young children given freedom in an environment prepared with materials designed for their self-directed learning activity.[23] The method itself aims to duplicate this experimental observation of children to bring about, sustain and support their true natural way of being.[24]

Waldorf

Waldorf education (also known as Steiner or Steiner-Waldorf education) is a humanistic approach to pedagogy based upon the educational philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. Learning is interdisciplinary, integrating practical, artistic, and conceptual elements. The approach emphasizes the role of the imagination in learning, developing thinking that includes a creative as well as an analytic component. The educational philosophy's overarching goals are to provide young people the basis on which to develop into free, morally responsible and integrated individuals, and to help every child fulfill his or her unique destiny, the existence of which anthroposophy posits. Schools and teachers are given considerable freedom to define curricula within collegial structures.

Steiner founded a holistic educational impulse on the basis of his spiritual philosophy (anthroposophy). Now known as Steiner or Waldorf education, his pedagogy emphasizes a balanced development of cognitive, affective/artistic, and practical skills (head, heart, and hands). Schools are normally self-

administered by faculty; emphasis is placed upon giving individual teachers the freedom to develop creative methods.

Steiner's theory of child development divides education into three discrete developmental stages predating but with close similarities to the stages of development described by Piaget. Early childhood education occurs through imitation; teachers provide practical activities and a healthy environment. Steiner believed that young children should meet only goodness. Elementary education is strongly arts-based, centered on the teacher's creative authority; the elementary school-age child should meet beauty. Secondary education seeks to develop the judgment, intellect, and practical idealism; the adolescent should meet truth.

Democratic education

Democratic education is a theory of learning and school governance in which students and staff participate freely and equally in a school democracy. In a democratic school, there is typically shared decision-making among students and staff on matters concerning living, working, and learning together.

Neill founded Summerhill School, the oldest existing democratic school in Suffolk, England in 1921. He wrote a number of books that now define much of contemporary democratic education philosophy. Neill believed that the happiness of the child should be the paramount consideration in decisions about the child's upbringing, and that this happiness grew from a sense of personal freedom. He felt that deprivation of this sense of freedom during childhood, and the consequent unhappiness experienced by the repressed child, was responsible for many of the psychological disorders of adulthood.

Classical education

Classical Education can be described as rigorous and systematic, separating children and their learning into three rigid categories, Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric. Mason was a British educator who invested her life in improving the quality of children's education. Her ideas led to a method used by some homeschoolers. Mason's philosophy of education is probably best summarized by the principles given at the beginning of each of her books. Two key mottos taken from those principles are "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life" and "Education is the science of relations." She believed that children were born persons and should be respected as such; they should also be taught the Way of the Will and the Way of Reason. Her motto for students was "I am, I can, I ought, I will." Charlotte Mason believed that children should be introduced to subjects through living books, not through the use of "compendiums, abstracts, or selections." She used abridged books only when the content was deemed inappropriate for children. She preferred that parents or teachers read aloud those texts (such as Plutarch and the Old Testament), making omissions only where necessary.

Unschooling

Unschooling is a range of educational philosophies and practices centered on allowing children to learn through their natural life experiences, including child directed play, game play, household responsibilities, work experience, and social interaction, rather than through a more traditional school curriculum. Unschooling encourages exploration of activities led by the children themselves, facilitated by the adults. Unschooling differs from conventional schooling principally in the thesis that standard curricula and conventional grading methods, as well as other features of traditional schooling, are counterproductive to the goal of maximizing the education of each child.

In 1964 Holt published his first book, *How Children Fail*, asserting that the academic failure of schoolchildren was not despite the efforts of the schools, but actually because of the schools. Not surprisingly, *How Children Fail* ignited a firestorm of controversy. Holt was catapulted into the American national consciousness to the extent that he made appearances on major TV talk shows, wrote book reviews for *Life* magazine, and was a guest on the *To Tell The Truth* TV game show.[25] In his follow-up work, *How Children Learn*, published in 1967, Holt tried to elucidate the learning process of children and why he believed school short circuits that process.

Contemplative education

Contemplative education focuses on bringing spiritual awareness into the pedagogical process. Contemplative approaches may be used in the classroom, especially in tertiary or (often in modified form) in secondary education. Parker Palmer is a recent pioneer in contemplative methods. Contemplative methods may also be used by teachers in their preparation; Waldorf education was one of the pioneers of the latter approach.