



Studies in the Education of Naturalism

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Abstract

Naturalism is a philosophical doctrine. Naturalism is concerned with “natural self” or “real self” . It contends that the ultimate reality is matter, and not mind or spirit. Naturalism does not believe in spiritualism. It denies the existence of a spiritual universe. The universe of ideas and values. According to naturalism, the material world is the only real world. It is the only reality. Whenever a system of education becomes stereotype, there is reaction against it in the form of revival of naturalism. This material world is being governed by a system of natural laws and the man, who is the creation of the material world, must submit to them. The naturalists have regard for actual facts, actual situations and realities. For them nature is everything. It is the whole reality. Behind everything there is Nature. It denies the existence of anything beyond nature. Naturalism believes that everything comes from nature and returns to nature. Nature, according to naturalism, is a self-sufficient entity. It is selfdetermined and governed by its own laws. Naturalism is a revolt against traditional system of education, which gives very little freedom to the child. In naturalism, maximum freedom and central position is given to the child. This philosophy believes that education should be according to the nature of child. It advocates creation of natural conditions in which natural development of child can take place. According to Rousseau, The role of teacher should be that of a guide. there are three sources of education namely, nature, men, and things. Education from nature is to prepare a natural man.

Keywords: Naturalism, Rousseau, Natural education



Introduction

Naturalism as a philosophy of education has exercised a great influence on the theory and practice of education. “It decries all external restraint in education and it condemns all unnecessary formalities in education. aims of naturalism education Self Expression, Naturalists believe that students should be provided with an opportunity to express their ideas and talents. In naturalistic point of view, self-security or self-preservation is an unavoidable aspect in life and education should enable the child to develop these qualities. Naturalists believes that each child is born with certain instincts, which are the guiding force behind all human conduct. Naturalists says that individual child may have to face several painful and stress laden situations in the physical world. While educating the child, his whole nature, tendencies, developmental status, capacities, instincts, likes and dislikes should be considered. Perfect development of individuality Education should aim at developing the aim at developing the child into joyous, rational, balanced useful and mature person. Naturalism in education stands for the doctrine of “follow nature” in education. It wants all education to be in strict conformity with the nature of the child. It stands for complete freedom to be given to the child in learning. He is to be left alone, absolutely free. Let him learn from the pages of nature without interference from any quarter. He is to be thrown into Nature as an explorer and discoverer. The study employed the qualitative research design. Data was derived from secondary sources comprising books, journals, scholarly papers and the internet. The expository and evaluative methods are employed . This study showed the naturalistic school of philosophy the aim of education is self-expression. The only discipline applied in this system is the discipline of natural consequences.

1. Definition and implication of naturalism

Teachers’ educational philosophies and their value systems influence their teaching styles and the way they deal with their students. So, the impact of teachers’ beliefs and values on teaching and learning is evident in each classroom [1]. It is shown in the way they teach, evaluate, and behave in the classroom. This means that teachers’ teaching style is the result of their beliefs and value system [2]. as is reflected in their classroom behaviors. According to Conti “an educational philosophy refers to a comprehensive and consistent set of beliefs about the teaching-learning transaction”. Teachers’ educational philosophies guide their practice and the way they approach learning, curriculum, assessment, and students’ responsibility in the teaching-learning exchange. The implications of any type of educational philosophy can be vividly seen in the classrooms through teachers’ teaching styles. Early childhood teachers can exhibit their own beliefs and value system in the way they teach, assess, and interact with their students. If teachers adapt naturalism as their educational philosophy, they certainly show that in their day to day practice. “As the name implies, the philosophy of naturalism suggests an explanation of life based solely on the laws of nature. With the understanding that natural laws are sufficient to explain all phenomena and life, naturalism abandons the need for a higher power, creator, and God” [3]. According to the naturalistic view, the universe observed by people has come into life and functioned all the way



through without the command or supervision of any superpower association. This theory is supported by science as its primary assumption [4]. These ideas can conflict with Arab society's dominant religious beliefs which lead to the purpose of this study. The Purpose The purpose of this study is to identify the educational implications of naturalism as an educational philosophy from the Jordanian childhood education teachers' perspectives. Despite the fact that some of ideas of naturalism might conflict with the beliefs and values of Jordanian Society, research has proven that Naturalism has been an effective educational philosophy. Research Problem and Questions Despite the fact that philosophy designates what educators believe about the teaching-learning transaction, not all principles of each philosophy are harmonious with children learning values. Thus, the educator's obligation as a professional practitioner might be to determine one's own philosophy. Based on this determination, a teacher can seriously determine as to how to build these teaching-learning environment procedures consistent with recognized principles associated with children's learning. As recommended by Rousseau that educational practices must focus on the pupil's mind "on what directly affects him", "Rousseau wishes to teach natural life ". He argued "...children should learn through their senses, through investigating and exploring the natural world" [5]. Gutek claims that "Naturalism assumes that nature is the ground of reality. Nature itself is a universal system that encompasses and explains existence, including human beings and human nature". This means that the focus on nature as a true force that guides human behavior from within. Man and in this context a child needs to have the freedom to naturally grow and develop without the interference of an outside force like teachers [6]. The educational principles of this philosophy are; education must adapt to nature, the education process should be entertaining for the students, education should be based on the naturalness of the child's activity, expanding knowledge is an important part in education, education is to help the person physically as well as mentally, teaching methods are inductive, students punishment, which should be done compassionately, is based on natural consequences of making mistakes [7].

2. Rousseau's Thought of Natural Education

To understand Rousseau's view of education in Emile means to comprehend 'negative education/ as he uses the term Fundamental to that notion are his assertions that it is much more important to exclude vice and error from the child's life than to inculcate virtue and truth, and that the essential thing is to make the young child a good healthy animal, especially by allowing him as much freedom as possible According to Rousseau, education ought to consist less in precept than in practice, with attempts to develop reason occurring much later than was the ordinary custom In fact, he claims that the educator should 'do the opposite of what is usually done and you will almost always be right.

Rousseau suggests that there are three teachers that educate humans: Nature, things, and man [8]. For humans to experience harmony, all three teachers must be synchronized. Since humans cannot control Nature, and humans have little control over things, the master teacher must be Nature. In Rousseau's understanding of Nature, absolutes exist. The fundamental patterns of Nature are inalterable by any force other than Nature itself. Even when Nature does appear to alter its own



pattern, it is often only a temporal necessity that will, in time, allow for the natural order to reassert itself. For example, trees always grow vertically. Although a man may argue that he has witnessed a tree growing horizontally from the side of a mountain, or even surmise that he himself altered the nature of the tree by planting it on the side of the mountain, in due time Nature will bend the tree, and the man's illusion of control, to its will. The same can be said for the nature of humans. Like the tree, humans have a natural way of being. Humans are formed from Nature and their fundamental patterns are best understood through the instruction of Nature. Although humans may delude themselves with a fundamental role in the direction of human development, human influence is always tempered by time. Rousseau suggests that the best thing humans can do for their own education is participate in, and avoid interfering with, Nature's way. Rousseau's conceptions of Nature, human-nature, and the place of humans in Nature are not uncontested. Aristotle, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Francis Bacon all offer different notions of Nature. According to Rousseau, the state of Nature (what is natural) can be understood through two fundamental characteristics. The first and most basic characteristic of Nature is self-preservation (amour de soi) [9]. The second characteristic, which is a product of the first, is a compassion (pitié) for all sentient life. These two fundamental characteristics are what Rousseau considers to be "natural." In other words, that which preserves one's life and seeks to preserve the lives of others is natural. According to Rousseau, the "unnatural" is a form of narcissism (amour propre) that arises when humans interact in ways that emphasize individual rather than mutual gain. From birth, humans do not have the capacity to survive independent of others. This reality suggests that certain forms of human interaction are natural and that humans have an important role in the education of others. However, Rousseau argues that when human interactions violate self-preservation or compassion and are manipulated to benefit people in positions of power they become unnatural [9].

3. Education for Citizenship

This side of Rousseau's educational theory also will be summarized briefly in light of the principles clarified at the outset. An effort will be made to search out some philosophical principles pertinent to education for citizenship as described by Rousseau in his so-called 'minor educational writings.' Again, an effort will be made to correlate the education and the philosophy. Educational theory. The same four topics followed in analyzing education for individuality will be used here: they are aims or goals of education, educational agencies, curriculum, and methods of teaching and teacher-student relationship. The primary aim of education, according to Rousseau in 'Considerations on the Government of Poland and on the Reformation of It Projected in April, 1772,' is clearly nationalistic: it is to form patriotic citizens [10]. Other goals are explicitly or implicitly included as means to the formation of loyal countrymen. For example, educators attempt to acquaint students with the heritage of their forefathers, that is, with the values and ideals which inspired them [11]. Thirdly, an objective closely related to this one is to familiarize students with current conditions and facts about their country, especially its laws. Fourthly, students should be subjected to rules and regulations at an early age so as to inculcate a respect for authority and order to foster a spirit of equality and fraternity [12]. Finally, another specific objective of the



educational process is to motivate, particularly through personal example, the kind of behavior which best will promote the interests of the country [11]. Whereas the education of the individual, as such, requires the ‘cooperation’ of three educational agents (man, nature, and things), the direct formation of a citizen is accomplished primarily through the state. In the principles from the ‘minor writings’ introducing these remarks, the role of the parents is not emphasized, however, Rousseau does leave open the possibility of domestic education, at least within limitations. At any rate, this education is unquestionably the most important responsibility of the state, and the curriculum should be determined by law [12]. He refers explicitly to mother, father, and children in one passage, but the first is a simile for ‘homeland,’ and the last two must be understood in the context of patriotism – fathers and sons of the nation [11]. The curriculum, as just indicated, must be formulated and ordered by the state [12]. The content (what will be taught) will be highlighted by the experience and capabilities of the rulers and the courage and virtue of the citizens. In other words, history will hold a central place in the curriculum, particularly the history of the nation taught in such a manner as to glorify its past. Probably a course in government would be included since the young students must be taught the laws of the state [11]. Play and games would also be organized for groups of children. Regardless of other subjects which might be offered, the form and sequence of the studies is an important responsibility of the lawmakers. Apparently, then, the curriculum would be divided into academic and non-academic components, with the former focusing on history and government, which are intended to inform students of their national heritage and current laws and leaders, to mould favourable attitudes toward their country, and to prompt action on its behalf. Finally, the methods and teacher-student relationship in directly educating a citizen also appear to differ significantly from those suggested in *Emile*. For example, whereas verbalization is de-emphasized in one instance, the famous warriors are brought in to ‘preach courage’ in national education. One would also assume that lecturing and discussion would hold a prominent place when the ‘upright judges grown white in their office teach justice [12]. The examples of these and others would also be significant in the formation of the young. Another contrast is seen in the freedom afforded *Emile* and the authority of discipline exercised in the direct rearing of a citizen. In regard to the latter, children from an early age must become accustomed to discipline through strict enforcement of rules and laws [13].

4. Political Philosophy

Rousseau’s contributions to political philosophy are scattered among various works, most notable of which are the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, the *Discourse on Political Economy*, and *The Social Contract*. However, many of his other works, both major and minor, contain passages that amplify or illuminate the political ideas in those works. His central doctrine in politics is that a state can be legitimate only if it is guided by the “general will” of its members. This idea finds its most detailed treatment in *The Social Contract*. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau sets out to answer what he takes to be the fundamental question of politics, the reconciliation of the freedom of the individual with the authority of the state. This reconciliation is necessary because human society has evolved to a point where individuals can no longer supply their needs through their own unaided efforts, but rather must depend on the co-operation of others.



The process whereby human needs expand and interdependence deepens is set out in the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality. In that work, the final moment of Rousseau's conjectural history involves the emergence of endemic conflict among the now-interdependent individuals and the argument that the Hobbesian insecurity of this condition would lead all to consent to the establishment of state authority and law. In the Second Discourse, this establishment amounts to the reinforcement of unequal and exploitative social relations that are now backed by law and state power. In an echo of Locke and an anticipation of Marx, Rousseau argues that this state would, in effect, be a class state, guided by the common interest of the rich and propertied and imposing unfreedom and subordination on the poor and weak. The propertyless consent to such an establishment because their immediate fear of a Hobbesian state of war leads them to fail to attend to the ways in which the new state will systematically disadvantage them [14].

5. Educational Implications of Naturalism

Naturalism when applied to education means putting the child at the centre of all educational processes and natural laws will be the teacher to teach the child according to his own nature. Nature of a child is of two types: physical nature and biological (psychological) nature. Former is external and later is internal. For the natural development of the child, the external laws of nature should correspond and coincide with the internal nature of the child. It means that child should be given full freedom to develop his innate tendencies and natural capacities. External environment will not hamper this natural process at all. Thus, naturalism was a reaction to idealism, humanism and formalism which insisted on bookish knowledge to be enforced into the mind of the child from outside. The credit of introducing naturalism into education goes to Comenius and Francis Bacon but Rousseau and Spencer brought this movement to the zenith [15].

5.1. Aims of Education

It is very difficult to establish any definite aim of education according to this Philosophy the reason is that nature is neither definite nor certain. That is why when Rousseau says that the aim of education should be to establish harmony between man, nature and substance, the task of an educator becomes very difficult. How can unchangeable nature of objects be harmonized to a changing nature of man. This is really a challenging task. Another difficulty of establishing aims of education is that all naturalists do not have consensus over the aims of education. Different philosophers have propounded different aims of education. Some of these aims which are totally individualistic in nature are given below.

5.2. Preparation of child for struggle of life

According to biological naturalism, the aim of education is to prepare the child for struggle in order to adapt to the environment, only then he will be able to survive.

5.3. Attainment of comforts and pleasure

According to physical naturalism, the aim of education is to develop the child to attain material comforts through scientific inventions and discoveries.



5.4. Sublimation of instincts

McDougall opposed the view of physical naturalism and said that the aim of education is not to attain pleasure but to sublimate the uncontrolled instincts. If it is not sublimated, the man may distort the natural environment by artificial means and it will very dangerous for him.

5.5. Conditioning of reflex action

According to mechanical naturalism, the aim of education is to establish reflex action of children by conditioning. When senses and other organs are trained, child's responses get controlled and conditioned. Thus without jeopardizing the freedom of the child, learning by conditioning taught to him.

5.6. Adjustment to environment:

According to Lamarck, environment is not always conducive to natural living of the child. So, the aim of education is to strengthen the capacity of the child to adjust with hostile and changing environment.

5.7. Development of physical and natural powers

Naturalism does not believe in any form of idealism as well as the spirituality explained by it. According to Spencer, the aim of education is to develop the physical and natural powers of the child through experience and experimentation. For this purpose, child is made physically healthy and strong [15].

6. Conclusion

Naturalism has tremendously influenced the modern educational theories and practices. Its permanent contributions in the field of education may be summed up: 1. "Follow nature" is the watch-word of naturalism. The innate nature of the child should be developed in natural environment and not in the artificial atmosphere of the school.

2. Instincts, impulses and emotions should form the basis of all education of the child. According to the naturalists, instincts should be the main instrument of education.

3. Pedocentricism is another important contribution of the naturalists in the field of education. In the educative process the child takes the pivotal position. "It is the child himself rather than the educator, the school, the book or the subjects of study that should be in the foreground of the educational picture." Children should be treated as children and not as adults in miniature.

4. The freedom of the child is another important feature of naturalistic education. The child should grow freely according to his own nature and pace without interference from the educator or the parents. True education takes place when the nature, powers and inclinations of the child are allowed to develop freely with a minimum of guidance. The naturalists strongly advocate freedom for the child.

5. Senses are the gateways of knowledge. Education is very much effective when it comes through sensory channels. As such, naturalists consider the training of senses very important.

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In conclusion we can say that naturalism has secured freedom for the child and has further succeeded in freeing the child from many a tyranny of rigidity, interference and strict discipline. Naturalism has given an impetus to new psychological methods in education. Self-expression, follow nature, auto-education, play-way, Pedocentricism, sense-training, self-discipline and learning by doing are some of the main characteristics of Naturalism.



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