

Rousseau's Philosophical and Educational Innovation in Vietnam Today

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Abstract

Rousseau was a great thinker of educational philosophy. This paper explores Rousseau's view of educational philosophy to be aware of educational goals and innovation using dialectical materialism. Methodology is a comprehensive principle, a development principle, and a specific historical focus. The above method is the basis for understanding people and human nature in general. The article indicates that education needs to understand educators as well as learners. The paper also describes the task of education to recognize that human nature is a process from childhood to adulthood. In addition, the report uses analytical and aggregated methods to realize that Rousseau's educational ideas have tremendous and profound implications for Vietnam's educational innovation today.

Keywords: *Education, innovation, philosophy, Rousseau, Vietnam*

Introduction

Educational philosophy in Vietnam is currently interested in the process of educational innovation. There are many different views regarding the implementation of educational innovation, such as that education involves developing new ways for students to improve their knowledge, and that education is the imparting of skills and experience needed in order to join the workforce, so that is necessary to innovate in accordance with the requirements of enterprise. There is also the view that education must develop the individual freedom of the child. These views do not fully address educational content and methods in the 4.0 technology era, however, because today, as the amount of available knowledge constantly increases, conducting educational innovation by cramming knowledge into students will only make their minds immature; children are increasingly numb and tired. Educational reform in Vietnam should aim at building an educational philosophy with the goal of educating learners to actively build society and become the future owners of a developed nation. It is necessary to define education as

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serving people in social life. The philosophy of education needs to build harmony, form comprehensive people, and shape personal and collective values (Berges Puyo, 2020; Ebersole & Kanahele-Mossman, 2020).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher of the 18th century, emphasized that the mere use of reason is not enough to guarantee a virtuous life, because human nature, even if it is conditioned by reason, is also nature. According to Rousseau, education that adds heavy “shackles” will not enable children to become mature, confident, and self-sufficient. In Rousseau’s 1762 work *Émile, or, On Education*, a boy named Emile is educated from birth to marriage by his teacher and becomes an “ideal citizen” through five stages of training; Rousseau outlined philosophies and educational methods that help the “natural man” to have enough physical health and mental energy to cope with life’s challenges. According to Rousseau, this development requires attention to the correspondence between the child’s needs, strengths, and abilities. This relationship does not form naturally, and the child needs the care of adults.

Rousseau was strongly critical of artificial forms of society created by human reason for education, for this has corrupted the deepest nature of people. Therefore, the educational philosophy of Rousseau is that people are not “objects” but “subjects” of society and education. He maintained that the mission of education is not to train people for society but to maximize the “real” in people. Such an education oriented to human nature should not be understood as a mere natural process, as if it were simply for adolescents to come to their natural maturity. Making people capable of self-development in accordance with nature is an extremely important and difficult task, requiring educators to have a very accurate understanding of human nature. Thus, education is conceived as the third factor between nature and society, an intermediate piece of land isolated from the impacts of society for natural development. And one’s nature can, in turn, develop itself only when detached from the mere natural process.

The Goal of Education in Vietnam Today

Vietnamese education implements innovation to train Vietnamese citizens with digital transformation knowledge and skills to become global citizens. Therefore, Education Innovation is identified by the industry as a breakthrough stage, an important task to focus on in the coming years. Innovation of educational goals and methods helps improve the quality of education and, more importantly, contributes to improving labor productivity, creating tremendous opportunities for international associations (Pham, 2021). Currently, education is implementing

innovation with the new general education program. In particular, the impact of Covid-19 has brought pressure to educational activities, but at the same time it has created incentives for autonomy in teaching, innovation for teachers to become stronger, and opportunities for teachers and students to adapt and apply online teaching methods.

Since 2013, Vietnam has carried out fundamental and comprehensive renovations of education (Vietnam, 2013). The success of education is not in textbooks. The decisive role in the success of educational innovation is the role of the teacher. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify that educational objectives must be associated with the part of the teacher in the use of educational methods to educate students. This is even more evident when the teacher must notice that in each student there must be a different approach depending on the ability of each child. The goal of education allows people to meet the requirements of the times. The role of innovation through the teacher's educational method is the basis for providing knowledge and ethics to learners; thereby, learners are equipped in an exciting, proactive, and active way in the educational process. Vietnamese education is close to recognizing this and changing in the process of education innovation.

Regarding improving the quality of education and training, according to the World Bank's 2020 report on human capital, Vietnam's Human Capital Index reached 0.69, ranking 38th out of 174 economies; the educational outcome component of Vietnam ranks 15th, equivalent to countries such as the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden (World Bank, 2020). Many indicators of Vietnam's general education are highly appreciated in the region, such as the rate of mobilization of six-year-old children in Grade 1 reaching 99% (ranked 2nd in ASEAN region, after Singapore) and the rate of students going to school and completing the primary program after five years reaching 92.08%, ranking in the top of ASEAN (World Bank, 2020).

Rousseau and Educational Philosophy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was one of France's most iconic thinkers during the Enlightenment. One of his most famous works is *Émile, or On Education* (1762). This work, an educational treatise in the form of a novel, contains ideological content in many fields (philosophy, education, ethics, society, etc.). During the French Revolution, it became the inspiration for the formation of the national education system. *Émile, or On Education* is both political and philosophical. It addresses the question of what the relationship between an individual and society

should be. Rousseau's philosophy of goals and modes of education is essential but not fundamental. The content of his educational philosophy is "understanding the learner."

This paper uses a unique dialectical method to study the history of thought, analyze the method of combination and synthesis, the process of loading and interpreting, comparing, and conceptualizing, to define Rousseau's concept of education in his philosophy. The paper studies Rousseau's *Émile* and uses materialistic dialectic methods, analytical and synthesis methods, induction and interpretation, comparison, and generalization to clarify Rousseau's educational philosophy to consider and evaluate the approach to goals and methods of educating a complete human being.

Educational Goals

An educational goal is a system of norms of a personality model formed in a specific educational object (Bostan et al., 2021). There is a system of specific social requirements in each era, in each stage defined for the personality of a type of educational object. Therefore, the objectives of education depend on each step of social development and each stage of the human education process (Gunio, 2021; Marouli, 2021; Timberlake, 2020).

According to Rousseau, developing a child's inner abilities and competencies is the primary goal of education (O' Hagan, 2002). This development should happen naturally. In *Émile*, Rousseau points out that education should minimize the limitations of civilization and bring people as close to nature as possible. His idea is to replace formal education with one that is both natural and spontaneous. Rousseau is committed to describing young Emile's upbringing in a way that is consistent with the ideal society. Emile is taken from his parents and school and placed in the hands of a tutor. Tutoring brings him closer to the wonders and beauty of nature. Natural education is an idea found to be at the heart of this work (Diedericks, 2021).

Education will help a child survive. Life is not only an act of breathing, but it consists of work, the development of sensory organs, and the rational use of bodily capacities. Education gears toward making a child a natural person. According to Rousseau, developing the senses is a primary goal of early education. The purposes of the human body act as portals of knowledge. Therefore, education should help a child develop and train their senses (Schaeffer, 2021).

Educational Methods

Educational methods are the principles used by teachers to enable learners to learn. These strategies are defined in part by the topic being taught and partly by the nature of the learner. The

method of successful education is to be consistent and effective with the learner's characteristics and the type of learning it is said to bring. Teaching methods are approached from a variety of perspectives (Coe et al., 2021).

Rousseau rejects the formal teaching methods of his time, believing that they lead to the suppression of natural inclinations in a child. His educational philosophy includes many teaching methods that serve as an alternative to formal educational processes.

Experience, Direct Observation, and Learning by Doing

Rousseau believes that understanding and direct observation enhance sensory organs and reasoning abilities. He advises children to have experience before expressing and objecting to words. He discourages book knowledge and insists on knowledge acquired through experience. These ideas are most evident in his saying, "Let the child learn nothing from the book that they can learn from the experience" (Rietmeijer et al., 2021). Rousseau advocates for practical rather than theoretical education. He believes that the knowledge gained through employment is permanent compared to the knowledge gained through speech. Since long lectures reduce children's interest in learning new things, children should act for themselves (Kent Kükürtcü, et al. 2021; Weissgerber, 2021).

The widely classified teaching methods are teacher-centric and student-centered. In a teacher-centric approach to learning, teachers are the leading authority figures; students, viewed as "empty vessels," have a primary role in passively absorbing information through lectures and direct instruction with the ultimate goal of testing and evaluation. The role of teachers is to impart knowledge and information to their students. In this model, teaching and assessment see two separate entities. Student learning is measured through tests and score assessment objectively. In a student-centered approach, on the other hand, teachers and students play equally active roles in the learning process. The teacher's primary function is to train and facilitate students to learn and understand the entire material. Methods with students are learning measures through formal and informal assessment forms, including group projects, student portfolios, and classroom participation. Teaching and evaluation are interconnected; students learn action during the teacher's teaching process. Commonly used teaching methods may include taking classes, performing, rereading, or combining these methods (Warman, 2021).

Discussion

Vietnam's point of view on educational goals is similar to Rousseau's. In order to achieve its educational goals, Vietnamese education must realize that the role of the teacher is decisive. The success of Vietnam's educational reform is due to the innovation in the teacher's teaching philosophy that must be associated with the educational philosophy of the society.

Rousseau's educational goals are associated with the role and duties of the teacher. Education teaches a child to become a free person, not to train a product of rehabilitation in society or a citizen of a particular regime. A free person thinks and acts without being bound by material, prejudice, public opinion, or control by sensual passions. That is, a free person should be mature and independent in thinking and judgment, using reason to judge, make decisions, and act rationally toward "nature" and truth.

To understand learners, it is necessary first to understand human nature. Rousseau wrote that everyone dies in the end; this is the reality of living beings, and no one is exempt. He said that kindness represents humanity because people, of course, must do good to live well together. Integrity is at the bottom of our hearts. It may or may not be consistent with human nature. If morality follows human nature, then man can only be mentally healthy and in good condition as long as he is in good faith. He also said that there is practically no good thing that exists between man and man. He wrote, "Our true wisdom includes slave prejudices; All our customs are dependence, confusion, frustration and impulsiveness. People are born, live and die in slavery"; "As long as it holds the human face, it shackles our institutions"; "Man is born free, but then he lives in chains. Some people think they are the boss, and they are more slaves than their servants." In the reality of such a society, Rousseau says it is necessary to look for an excellent source to answer why interest is lost in society and restore goodness.

Rousseau argues that philosophical tendencies do not solve the problem of human nature because it comes only from one side of the "fundamental relationship between the individual and society (community)" or rather "the contradiction between the individual and the social person." "In the case of the world, they look far in book quests that they don't bother to do what's around them... They forget that they must love their country first." Rousseau wanted to find the actual basis for explaining the good (the most apparent manifestation of human nature). He found, in his view, that

basis, which is the nature or nature of man. Rousseau wrote: “Prejudice, power, necessity, for example, all social organizations” “stifle nature and leave nothing instead.” Rousseau refers to the human trait that is conscience. He wrote: “Conscience! Conscience! Conscience is instinct, the gift of immortality. It is the voice of heaven; it’s solid reconnaissance for the ignorant and the crude. It is a sign of wisdom and freedom. It is a judge who never confuses good and evil and makes a man like God; Conscience makes human nature great, and human action becomes moral. Without conscience, man no longer feels human, but man feels nothing more than animals.” A person without a conscience has nothing but intellect and reason without principles. Rousseau believes that conscience is the most natural element of man, which does good and makes human action moral. Conscience is innate, God-given to man. It is an important thought, a moral point of view, and establishes the foundation for morality. By understanding human nature like this, Rousseau explains why man is born out of a good spirit, but when he enters social life, he becomes evil, losing his nature. “It is necessary to attribute all that pristine tendency” and “once we know the roots, we see clearly where one leaves the path of nature.” The path to overcoming this situation can only be a new education.

Innovative Educational Methods

In the past, education in Vietnam was influenced by Confucianism with the educational goal of serving a feudal society. Vietnam is doing socio-economic renovation to build a socialist country, so it must have socialist people. Therefore, education reform is attracting the attention of the whole society. Innovating teaching methods include reforming general education toward modernity; promoting positivity, initiative, creativity, and knowledge application; focusing on teaching how to learn to think; encouraging self-study; and creating a basis for learners to update and renew knowledge, skills, and capacity development.

To accomplish these goals is the synchronous and interactive operation of the elements in active teaching methods, overcoming the weaknesses of the method of one-way transmission, and at the same time harmoniously combining teaching instrumental knowledge with methodological knowledge, especially focusing on teaching how to learn and self-study methods so that learners can learn for life.

Rousseau was very interested in educational methods. The educational method determines the educational goal. And this duty belongs to the teacher. Rousseau says that education must train one of the three types of teachers. The first is education from nature, the second is the education

of man himself, and the third is the education of things, due to our own experience of objects affecting us. Rousseau argues that only human education is the most important and unique thing that we truly own. He asserts: “We begin to learn when we begin to live; our education begins at the same time as we are born; our first tutor is our nanny”; “Education, teaching, education are three different things in the purpose of education. Because in education we need teachers, tutors, and teachers. But the distinction of tasks in education is not properly understood. Therefore, we ask that the child be followed only by one instructor.” Rousseau found that education manifested in many relationships around the child, so he wants educators to combine all three: the teacher, the tutor, and the teacher. Rousseau argues that the goal of education is learning. Our true practice is “learning about the human condition”; “there is only one science to teach children: the science of human duty.”

Teachers are the Guides for Students to Achieve the Goals of Education

According to Rousseau, to understand the teacher is to understand the future, what the child can become. The role of the teacher is mainly to guide the learner, not to impose on the child their understanding, thoughts, or even examples. Rousseau wrote: “Treat your students according to their age. First, the teacher must put himself in the student’s situation and control their actions before the teacher knows about a certain quality that they recognize; when learning, the student must practice it. Moral education does not act but must be taught by doing. Students only gain experience through employment. Therefore, teachers should not force students to learn how to bear any punishment. Because that doesn’t mean the student is wrong. Therefore, teachers should never ask their students for forgiveness. Because students don’t know they’ve offended. Since there is no moral concept in its actions, it cannot do anything morally wrong, so it is not punishable or reprehensible”; “Every student’s mind has special forms. Therefore, education needs to nurture those forms of students. That is very important in the process of successfully caring for and nurturing such forms. Human education needs to be tested for their nature for a long time and observe their students before saying the first word to it. Therefore, let the seeds of personality manifest first. First of all, don’t tie it to anything. Only then can you see the whole person.” Therefore, according to Rousseau, the child must be at the right age and have the appropriate content and form of education. Although he may understand the psychology, wisdom, and accommodation of unscientific, holistic children, this thought is his own experience.

Rousseau believes that educators (teachers) should do what is best for the child. The teacher must become the one who teaches everything around the child. The authority of the teacher is respect and virtue. Teachers should not be stingy and harsh. Teachers need to open their whole hearts to teaching and giving time, attention, and love. Education must create people who are moral and compassionate, respecting others as well as themselves, and so teachers must be fair, compassionate, and noble, and they must teach charity and love for other living things. Although Rousseau asks teachers to “remember that before you dare to start training a person, you must be human,” he would like teachers to strive to be ideal humans.

Rousseau’s thinking is well suited to the view that learners are at the center of the whole work of education. Learning is the process of understanding human nature. Rousseau’s understanding of learners is inseparable from the knowledge of human nature in general. That has excellent value based on Western traditions and from Rousseau’s own experience. He points out that it is impossible to understand learners, including children, without a shared understanding of human nature. He points out that educational ideas in general and educational practices need to build on a defined philosophical foundation.

The essential function of philosophy is the function of thought. Philosophical thought is the standard guide to all human cognitive activities (Andrews, 2019). Educational thought and the whole work of organizing educational practices are carried out methodically, not arbitrarily. Education cannot follow the person’s imagination doing academic work or being “assigned” to do academic work. Suppose teachers are required first to understand human and human nature. In that case, teachers must understand the need for teachers (Morris & Chapman, 2020; Smith, 2020; Waychunas, 2020). Teachers must be human before taking on the responsibility of educating the child to become a human being. Therefore, a philosophical understanding of human nature will lead the entire educational activity of the teacher both in the formulation of the theory and the practice of education.

Conclusion

Rousseau’s educational ideas have lasting value. Teachers must be aware of what will happen and the external environment that affects the child. Teachers must understand the characteristics, psychological structure, physiology, and competence of the child. Teachers must understand what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen to the child so that the teacher can guide

the child to become what they will. Rousseau's educational philosophy requires teachers to understand that learners are "new," profound, and have great significance for such content. After nearly 35 years of renovation, Vietnam has overcome many difficulties and challenges and achieved great feats of historical significance. Vietnam has come out of underdeveloped status and entered the group of middle-income developing countries. However, economic achievements do not guarantee a strong and sustainable Vietnam. During the period before and after our country's renovation, the world has continuously witnessed profound changes in all aspects. The third and fourth industrial revolutions were born, and the thriving knowledge economy brings great development opportunities while posing significant challenges. Additionally, climate change, resource depletion, environmental pollution, ecological imbalance, and political and social upheavals also pose global challenges. To ensure sustainable development, many countries have constantly innovated education to improve the quality of human resources and equip future generations with a solid cultural foundation and high adaptability to all changes of nature and society. Therefore, building an educational philosophy is an urgent need for Vietnam to promote educational goals and methods, renewing the autonomy and self-determination of teachers in ensuring the success of educational philosophy.

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