

A Review on Philosophical Foundations of Philosophy Education for Children

Mohsen Mahmudi ¹, Mohammad Nejati ², Zahra Mahmudi ²

¹ Assistant Professor, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

² Assistant Professor, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

E-mail: mnejati1361@yahoo.com

Abstract: The movement of Philosophy for Children as a modern approach, nowadays, is considered in education field that claims, according to philosophy education, can introduce radical changes in educational programs and to improve qualitative process of education, an educational method which its consequence is philosophizing or philosophical thinking. The present paper aims to conduct a review of philosophy education's philosophical foundations of children, so the paper investigates the philosophical foundations of this educational approach according to Lipman's opinion. Findings, finally demonstrated that philosophical value of this educational program is grounded upon pragmatism. Pragmatism school has some characteristics that can effect on philosophy for children program in fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Despite emphasizing on children for nurturing of philosophical thinking by philosophy education, if this program couldn't increase its philosophical value, it can't realize its aim for nutrition of philosophical thinking.

[Mohsen Mahmudi , Mohammad Nejati , Zahra Mahmudi. **A Review on Philosophical Foundations of Philosophy Education for Children.** *Life Sci J* 2013;10(1):539-541] (ISSN: 1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 87

Keywords: Philosophy for Children; Philosophical Thinking; Philosophical Opinions; Existentialism; Pragmatism

1. Introduction

Aiming to improve educational system, Lipman introduced the approach of philosophy education for children forty years ago. Main goal of the program was to educate of thinking, deliberating, and reasoning from childhood, for involving children into philosophical discussions. Thinking education consists of a range of specific and general capabilities. Lipman presented his program, Philosophy for Children, as a subfield of philosophy and emphasized upon two elements of rationality and morality. To culturing children as thinker beings, the main aims considered by this program are education of thinking skills, education of independent thinking, and encouraging of argumentation faculty. Lipman maintained that in addition to memorization skill, children must learn conceptualization capability, analyzing, critiquing, judging and reasoning. Philosophy education isn't to educate the philosophers' opinions merely, rather its orientation is avoiding of error in thinking and getting away from bad acts. Main orientation of Lipman's approach and his followers is increasing of logical thinking skill. Critical thinking leads to facilitating of judgment, because it is based upon the criticism and self-improvement and is sensitive towards context (Lipman, 2012, p. 116), and according to him, the community of inquiry must be considered as the method of critical thinking (Lipman, 2003, p. 3). Splitter and Sharp (1995) maintained that one of interesting features of philosophy education for children is that it enables children to accept other one's ideas with openness and to respect for them (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, p. 6).

Program of philosophy education for children is facing with some defects about concept of philosophy and concept of child. Mere attention to logical thinking in the philosophy education for children leads to reductionism (reduction of philosophy to logic). Investigating of philosophy history's position in the program, with attention to importance of philosophy history for Hegel, it can be showed that philosophical value and weight of philosophy education program for children is low. Another critique towards curriculum of philosophy education for children is that the program intended to change the old tradition of presenting to students the philosophical information and to prioritize method over content. The new approach to education has encountered to important and fundamental questions about which must be considered. Proponents and pioneers of philosophy education for children ought to try for resolving the future challenges; otherwise new developments in education field can't be occurred. Investigating the philosophical principles of philosophy education for children from another outlook, present paper tries to examine Lipman's approach and his followers.

2. Philosophical Fundamentals of Philosophy Education for Children

Lipman maintained that some people have influenced on his work such as Gilbert Ryle, Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jean Piaget, and John Dewey. A look at philosophy education for children program shows that critical thinking isn't a new phenomenon in education field, and its origin returns to Socrates's education and

Plato's Academy. Socrates's life and method is criteria for the program's act. Central to his thoughts is attention to and care of Human, and he returned philosophy's look from nature towards morality. But, developing a definite model for it can be found in the beginning of twentieth century in Dewey's works which dismissed the old model of education, information accumulation, and determined for education the aim of nurturing of argumentation and judgment faculty and ability of data explanation in children according to a new model. Socrates is, in original sense, a foundation for philosophy education for children about philosophy, the concept of philosophizing, and also about conversation and questioning method as beginning and end of this method. For Plato philosophy is approaching towards perception, identification and dialectic. Dialectic is a transcendental and continuous moving concept for him. Philosophy, for him, isn't and end or stop point; rather it is a place for moving to upper stages. For children philosophy has same sense of philosophizing also. Intimacy of rules and stages of Descartes's method with considered method in the program of philosophy education for children, Rousseau's emphasizing on activity, experiences, interest, curiousness and freedom of children, Hegel's dialectic, Kant's thoughts have provided some of philosophy for children movement's thought aspects. Kant believed that it is necessary to act according Socrates's method for nurturing of reason. For Kant practical upbringing included skill, thrift or manage, and morality. Also he noted about skill that we must be careful that skill to be firm and persisting not temporary. One must not pretend to knowing something that he can't undertake. Hegel also maintained that ought to have a regular structure to be teachable. He firstly teaches underlying principles such as law, morality and religion to students, and then teaches logic and philosophy at higher classes. Hegel tried to familiarize his students with theoretical thinking through "classified exercises" (Spencer and Krauze, 1998, pp. 76-77). For Hegel education process has a precise relation with his philosophical thought as a whole and that is growth and development of spirit into persons, cultures and history.

Existentialism, analytic and pragmatism principles are philosophical schools which are present in the program of philosophy education for children. Base of existentialistic approach is emphasizing on individual aspects of learning. Existentialistic education system effort is to produce an original person who is conscious about freedom and also that any choice making leads to personal value creating. Existentialistic epistemological assumption is identical with Lipman's assumption. Because they have regarded individuals as responsible beings of their

knowledge and science. Choosing and responsibility are foundations of Lipman's existentialistic thought also. Also in epistemological problems, Lipman and existentialistic philosophers maintained that human situations are composed of rational and irrational elements. Bu difference between Lipman and existentialists is that he emphasized on scientific problem solving in following of pragmatists, but existentialists preferred that to examine and investigate about esthetics, moral, and emotional things along with cognitive issues.

Analytic philosophy including philosophy of logical analysis and logical positivism are other schools which have influenced over Lipman's approach. The job of analytic philosophy or analysis of philosophy is analysis of lingual concepts. Moore and Russell have emphasized upon analysis of concepts and words, and believed that this the main job of philosophy and the key for solving many problems or showing that they are unsolvable. Emphasizing on science and scientific achievements, Wittgenstein also believed that philosophy's job is analysis of concepts merely and merely. One of other issues which are emphasized by Lipman in his approach is that philosophy isn't theory, rather it is an activity and he referred to Wittgenstein's theory for proving this. For Wittgenstein (1923) philosophy isn't theory but it is an activity. Essentially a philosophical work is included explanation and elucidation, the result of philosophy isn't some philosophical premises, rather is clarification and elucidation of these premises. According this, philosophy is more an activity which one must do than a subject(s) to study (Smith, 1995, p. 30).

Lipman's main focus on Pierce, Mead, Dewey shown that pragmatism is an underlying foundation in program of philosophy education for children.

William James (1910) believed that pragmatic method is at first a solution for metaphysical conflicts, which otherwise can't receive to an end. Is the world unit or plural? Is it material or spiritual? These are concepts which every may be true about the world or not, and quarrel over such concept through tracing of its practical consequences. If this or that concept is true, then what practical difference can be occurred? If there can't be find any practical difference, then different alternatives have same meaning, therefore any quarrel is vain. Pragma term is derived from Greek word that mans action. This entered into philosophy for first time by Pierce in 1878 (James, 1996, pp. 40-41), and there absolutely no new things in pragmatic method. Socrates was one of skilled ones in pragmatism. Aristotle used this in a methodic way. Pragmatism indicates an absolute familiar attitude in philosophy, namely very

empiricism approach. Empiricist person leaves many of favorite habits of professional philosophers at once. He dismissed abstraction and inadequacy, literal solutions, priori reasons, fixed principles, closed systems and other words absolutes and origins. He turned around towards the concrete and sufficient things, towards facts and action and power. This means domination of empiricist attitude and honest giving up to the rational temper (James, 1996, p. 43). James believed that metaphysic pursued a sort of primitive inquiry often. Therefore, here, theories become instruments, not answers which calming us down for puzzles. We don't lean upon theories backwards, but we are moving forwards and sometimes regenerate the nature through them. Pragmatism makes milder and flexible our theories and appoints each one to do a work. Pragmatism isn't a simple thing intrinsically, and is in accordance with many old philosophical tendencies (James, 1996, pp. 44-45). Thus pragmatic method means a method for orientation. Method of turning from primaries, principles, imaginary necessities, and coming towards final thing, results, products, and fact affairs (Ibid, p. 46).

Dewey maintained that research is vital aspect of all sciences, and is used in all arts, professions and works continuously (Dewey, 1990, p. 6), and an act that doesn't necessitate the changes in context circumstances isn't a research (Ibid, p. 39). Also he considered the knowledge word a proper word for the aim and the end of an inquiry. For him any specific knowledge is the result of the specific inquiry, therefore generally the concept of knowledge is a generalization of discovered characteristics and belongs to the inferences that are results of inquiry. The knowledge as an abstract word is a name which is attributed to correct results of inquiries. The general concept of knowledge, when is expressed with attention to inquiry's result, implies an essential point about meaning of inquiry. Because the knowledge signifies that, in this context, if inquiry is used in a field, then this is as a continuous current (Ibid, P. 10). Because of this Dewey prefers the words "warranted Assertibility" over knowledge and belief (Ibid, p. 11). For Dewey rational aspect is a generalized concept of means-result relation (Ibid, p.12).

3. Conclusion

Review on philosophical origins of the Lipman's educational approach demonstrated that he used different philosophical assumptions of Idealism, Realism, Naturalism, Pragmatism and Existentialism.

Lipman's position has some similarities with some of theories, but there are some differences also.

For Lipman such educational program will be successful that has metaphysical and philosophical questions. Also in epistemological method, Lipman used Dewey's empiricist method. That means, he separates his way from traditional idealism and realism philosophy which have metaphysical outlook, and believed to problem solving that can be resolved by scientific method. Although philosophy study doesn't guarantee that individuals will be thinkers or better teachers, but it produces a valuable ground that helps to make persons more precise ones, and ignoring the path and course of philosophical concepts and assumptions, Lipman didn't forget paradigm of concepts.

Corresponding Author:

Mohammad Nejadi
Assistant Professor,
Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University,
Bandar Abbas,
Iran
E-mail: mnejati1361@yahoo.com

References

1. Spencer, Lloyd; Krauze, Andrzej; 2000, Hegel, Translated by Minayi, Fatemeh; Shirazeh Publ., Tehran.
2. Smith, Philip, 1991, Philosophy of Education, Translated by Beheshty, Saeed; Quds Razavi Publ. Mashahd.
3. William, James; 1996, Pragmatism, Translated by Rashidiyan, Abdolkarim; Second edition, Elmi-Farhangi Publ., Tehran.
4. Dewey, John; 1990, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, Tehran University Publ., Tehran.
5. Gotek, Gerald L.; 2009, Philosophical and Ideological Voices in Education, Trablsted by Pak Seresht, Mohammad Ja'far; Samt Publi. Tehran.
6. Kant, Immanuel; 1995, On Pedagogy, Translated by Shokouhi, Gholamreza; Tehran University Publ., Tehran.
7. Matthew Lipmann, 1991, Thinking in Education, New York: Cambridge University Press; 2nd edition, 2003.
8. Fisher, Robert, 1998, Teaching Thinking: Philosophical Inquiry in the Classroom, London: Cassel.
9. - Splitter, Laurence and Sharp, Ann M., 1995, Teaching for Better thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry, Hawthorn, Vic.: Australian Council for Educational Research.