

Liberal Education Towards Comprehensive Human Development

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In the trend of globalization, integration, and expanded international exchange, the education of people based on “creeds”, and “administrative orders” has proved to be lost, and no longer appropriate, causing many negative consequences, the most obvious manifestation of that mechanism is to eradicate the person, the sense of self-control, the spirit of initiative, integration, and independence in thought, critical thinking and confidence of progression and creativity; stimulate dependence, just get used to stereotypes, act blindly, etc. That’s the real reason why we need a liberal education. And the objective of this article is to build, develop and expand the values: of truth, goodness, and beauty, toward completely liberating people through analyzing the meaning and importance of the “liberal” educational method. To achieve this objective, the article uses a qualitative analysis method combined with the comparison method of synthesizing and exploiting data to ensure truthfulness in identifying and evaluating problems.

Keywords: humanity, creativity, enlightenment, freedom

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the knowledge economy has opened a new economic era - the era of the knowledge economy, under the influence of dramatic advances in science and technology, has created a completely different era of creativity from earlier eras. This requires that each country that desires to exist must actively and eagerly integrate into the global economy, otherwise, they will be on the sidelines of the general development process, that is, in the inevitable, volatile, and complicated development of the environment, each person must change themselves to have a new vision, new thinking, and wisdom to adapt to the requirements. In the era of the knowledge economy, knowledge plays a pivotal and decisive role in creating values. Therefore, education faces a new responsibility and a noble mission, not only imparts knowledge, above all, must “create” people, and make them become a subject worthy of their dignity. “The old man”, instead of having to obediently submit to the situation, being soft, compliant, only depending on and expecting the “grant”, and instructions of others; not daring to self-think, do it on their own, take responsibility for what they have chosen, rises to become the subjects of circumstances, the subject of freedom and creativity. And of course, to enlighten people, liberal education is needed.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach of the article is based on the worldview and methodology of Marxist philosophy and uses specific research methods such as analysis and synthesis; deductive and inductive; unity of logic and

history; abstraction, generalization; compare, contrast, and textual methods in research and presentation of article topics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Liberal Education: The Way to Freedom

The concept of “*éducation libératrice*” (liberation) is derived from French words, “enlightenment”, and “liberation”. It also means “education to liberate people”. Accordingly, the foundation of the liberal education method is the liberal spirit - aiming to cultivate and develop the most profound, most important, fundamental, and quintessential human values. The most sacred value of humans is freedom. Freedom is the origin of creativity. Thanks to creativity, humans “escaped” from the wild nature (herd life) to rise to control themselves, control the situation, realize the inevitability, and know to act according to the rule of beauty. It is through freedom that human can promote their inner strength and unlock their potential for development; at the same time, be aware of their dignity, respect themselves and others and not turn others into a means for nefarious purposes.

On the contrary, command-based education in bureaucratic societies always seeks to “terminate” people by depriving them of freedom and disseminating fear in their minds, making people obediently submit to the situation. The education based on commanding “creeds”, of course, is only suitable in human society in the “barbaric” – “primitive” – “half-human” period. The characteristic of this educational style is to annihilate the person; create a model that is “uniform” in thinking, and inflexible in action. Individuals only know to obey orders unconditionally, without the spirit of criticism, protest, and argument to determine the right –the wrong. The stereotyped way of thinking created people who are passive, dependent, expectant, afraid to stumble, do not accept the difference, fear the new, and lack independence in thinking and decisiveness in action. The “stereotyped” way of thinking shows mental immaturity and intellectual disability. The “protection” in terms of thinking is the main cause of human weakness, low self-esteem, fear, and ignorance. At the national level, an ignorant nation is a humble and enslaved nation.

Therefore, human needs liberation to awaken, open their minds to overcome “obstacles” and fear, and help them become confident and courageous on the path to seek the truth and self-determine their action. According to the spirit of I. Kant: liberation (enlightenment) means the liberation of people from the state of guardianship and autism. Guardianship is the state in which individuals fail to use their intellect without the guidance of others. The autism here is that the cause of this guardianship is not from the age of reason, but from the age of assertiveness and courage to use it without guidance. Become courageous use to use one’s reason; thereby, walking on their own on the path that one has chosen, without dependence, guidance, and protection from others (Kant, 1947, p.83).

Thus, freedom also means self-determination. Self-determination is self-selection, selecting to dare to be oneself, without someone else’s “teaching” or “guardianship”. To achieve true freedom, an individual must know how to hold his/her destiny and meaning of life, that is, must be an enlightened person who dares to face the reality, and looks directly at the truth with his/her view and capacity.

However, freedom will never be achieved without subjectivity. Subjectivity is the target of liberal education. Subjectivity is built from the foundation of giving prominence to humans, especially individual people. There, a human exists with the personality of a person - that is, a special, unique, separate individual that is not repeated in other individuals, rather than hiding behind the crowd, “dissolving” in the crowd – a lifeless person, without identity, pre-programmed by tradition, politics, and rules, forced to think and act under compulsion from others. Only when individuals are respected and appreciated, do humans dare to live as themselves, take the initiative to take on their personality and bravery, honor and conscience, rights and responsibilities.

The difference between humans and animals is only freedom. It is the freedom that is the opportunity for human to realize their true existing possibilities. And so, freedom is a value, and above all, it is a value that transcends all values - what makes human existence. Without this value, education is no more than an instrument of enslavement.

Liberal Education Is Means of Fostering a Personal Moral Life

Education is not just purely to expand knowledge for learners, train a generation of only academics, who value degrees. The sacred responsibility of true education is to foster human values, respect human dignity and outline the ultimate target of humans in a moral aspect.

A human cannot live solitarily, alone but is a group of creatures. In life activities, humans have interactive relationships. It is in this interaction relationship that each individual when acting for one's purposes must move towards the respective interests of the community and others, and must respect the ethical code. The ethical code requires individuals in all life activities to consider others a finality, not a means for arbitrary use; that is, act in such a way that each act is an application of the supreme principle which regards humans as a being with dignity and treats them as they do for themselves, not acts on behalf of an individual or unworthy objectives to lower or trample on the dignity of others.

The core value of liberal education is freedom, but it is human freedom, the freedom that is united with responsibility - moral responsibility (what must be done). Morality cannot exist without freedom. Morality takes freedom as the basis of existence because it is meaningless if responsibility does not have any premise which is the capacity to act freely. But unethical freedom becomes the wild freedom of the beast's instinctive life - inhuman life. It is the moral law that secures the freedom of all actions and prevents any violation of that sacred right by others.

An achievement-appreciating education orients learners to achievements and strives to gain achievements at all costs, flaunts formalistic values. Degrees, scores, and educational level are always considered important indicators to assess the quality, success, or failure of an individual, easily making learners illusory or delusive about their real capacity. Individuals compete to achieve the top position, to become the "elite", making people selfish, jealous, boastful, arrogant, complacent, "cold" and insensitive, look down on, and less to celebrate fellow humans - with those who are in unfortunate circumstances, in a "low rank" because society considers it low. While humanity education always considers humans as the finality, the destination of any action; directs humans to the values of freedom, equality, philanthropy, and general welfare. It does not teach people to fight for prosperity and happiness over the poverty and suffering of others but it arouses love, a spirit of generosity, motivates everyone to strive to rise, and knows to share joys and unhappiness, worries and concerns of a fellow human being.

Sympathy, and sharing, of course, require an understanding so much. Understanding here does not mean knowing everything, but first of all, knowing oneself. According to the spirit of the great philosopher Socrates, it was "knowing oneself". Knowing oneself makes humans become aware of their position in the world, clarifies who they are in the role of humans so that they also understand what is good for them, and distinguishes what should be done and what should not be done. Knowing oneself is to realize that each individual is just a small piece of the larger community; and that each of our success and glory are not only exchanged with our tireless efforts, but also exchanged with the failure and sacrifice of many others; Knowing oneself is to see that our perception of the universe is too little, or the more knowledge we have is just too limited.

Knowing oneself helps us to be modest to realize our limits, respect ourselves and respect others, constantly seek knowledge, cultivate understanding, study diligently to enrich our knowledge, and improve ourselves. The reason why Socrates became a great philosopher was because, in his search for the truth, he always kept in mind: "I only know one thing that I know nothing". "Knowing nothing" does not mean that we cannot perceive but see our limited bad consequences caused by ignorance, thereby promoting inquiry, discovery, research, learning... Only when we are modest, we can truly empathize and thoroughly understand others; and at the same time see the meaning and importance of proactive and lifelong learning as a means of helping individuals continuously improve, and at the same time cope with changes that are happening too fast and extremely unpredictably. Misunderstanding their understanding is the biggest obstacle in the journey of perception and seeking the truth.

Liberal Education Gives Prominence to the Critical Spirit

The spirit of Doubt is the beginning of progress and creativity, the path to the truth, and the most radical liberation of reason. It is the starting point of the scientific method. Doubt helps learners avoid biased

prejudices, identify the truth, motivate them to seek knowledge, seek new understandings, and gradually come to the real truth. Without a doubt, human thought will stop, which leads to satisfaction, conservatism, prejudice, stagnation, backwardness, violence, and increasing ignorance. Bias mainly comes from the fact that people do not know how to use their minds and are intellectually directed by others. Therefore, if wanting to be independent on the path of creativity, we have to get rid of the spiritual “guidance” and the direction of public opinion in the spirit of critical Doubt.

Command-based education seeks to bring people down, and “subdue” people only for a ruling. There, the truth is not the fact but it conforms to the customs and rules. Any objection will not be accepted. In that educational environment, learners just need to listen, obey, obediently follow, and learn. Creativity is not necessary for “stability”, sometimes even seen as a “destructor”.

On the contrary, liberal education is creativity-oriented. Creativity is a characteristic of freedom, whereby man transcends creatures, and controls oneself and circumstances. But creativity is an attribute of rationalist thinking, fundamentally based on the spirit of criticism and scientific Doubt. Because, in the end, the goal of every search for knowledge is truth, a thorough understanding of the nature of objects is to transform them. However, the truth is not constant, it changes with the development of perception. And, one of the main ways to reach the truth is to doubt the truth.

Without promoting the spirit of criticism, Doubt, and civic responsibility of learners, knowledge remains in place, the old has become obsolete, but the new has not yet been born in time to solve the problems just appearing. Scientific criticism does not mean rejecting everything and disbelieving nothing but providing a new interpretation, exploring new ways to access knowledge, and through the self-design ability to think to turn unclear things into clear things, turn scattered things into the system and eliminate the random element in research by correctly identifying the inevitable form of expressing the content of knowledge. For reaching this especially necessary Doubt, learners must exist as a free subject. Only when grounded in freedom, they can separate themselves from all external restraints.

Doubt of old ways of evaluation is the easiest way to find new ones. Therefore, Doubt is both the starting point and the driving force for the expansion of knowledge, as said by Descartes: “...if he doubts, he is thinking; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he thinks he should not approve hastily...” (On the Trinity, X. 10.14; 2002: 55-56). Doubt in that sense is a measure of a person’s maturity. If a person is incapable of Doubt, only believes in existing beliefs, or has to rely on the intellectual guidance of others, in essence, he or she still cannot escape from the “adolescence of perception”.

Liberal Education: The Path to Democratization

The modern scientific and technological revolution led by liberal education has opened up the practical possibility for the democratization process in any field. The emergence of information technology makes the democratization process become a turning point in social life. With these extremely precise, fast, and effective media, everyone, whether living in the city, in the countryside, or the remote mountainous areas, can in principle at the same time know about hot events that have just happened or are ongoing in a remote location on the planet.

Democratization, starting with the democratization of information through modern media, not only brings people the latest knowledge and news that may not be updated in written books and newspapers, but allowing people to exchange, discuss, debate, and present opinions on all issues, including the most sensitive ones that are interested, but also does not allow acts of suppression of information, non-transparency, concealment of wrongdoings, crimes against mankind. The democratization of information, therefore, also contributes significantly to the democratization of the economy, the democratization of power, the democratization of policymaking, and contributes to the cleansing of the national administration. Authority and information power can even become political power, toppling the entire ruling regime or corporation.

Liberal education has brought particularly feasible social and cultural changes for democratization. The knowledge society cannot function effectively without highly educated people who are familiar with thinking for themselves. Furthermore, the high increase rate of economic security has increasingly led to an emphasis on the syndrome of self-expression values – a syndrome that gives high priority to freedom of

choice and promotion of political actions. Accordingly, beyond a certain point, avoiding democracy becomes difficult because eres training the public’s demand for a more open society becomes costly and detrimental to economic performance. In the long run, the general trend of modern society inevitably leads to democracy, even if it is an incomplete democracy.

CONCLUSION

In 1996, the president of the United Nations UNESCO Commission on Education outlined four pillars of international education for the twenty-first century: Learning to know, Learning to do Learning to live together, and Learning to be. In that spirit, education aims at core values such as truth, justice, goodness, freedom, equality, philanthropy, association, and cooperation... Therefore, more than ever, we need a liberal education to provide learners with an understanding that is basic and practical needs of the times as well as skills for them to adapt to the needs of life and know how to handle situations; know how to actively acquire and seek knowledge. Liberate for people to be independent, dare to do, dare to take responsibility for their choices, dare to commit themselves, not be afraid of difficulties and challenges, and know to accept both risks and failures because of such choices. Liberate to awaken potential and aspirations have ideals, ambitions, and determination to overcome the obstacles of the old and outdated “imprisonment” thinking to exploit and promote their inherent potentials and take advantage of opportunities in life to promote their values and bring benefits to the community.

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