Perennialism educational philosophy pdf

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You're Reading a Free Preview Page 3 is not shown in this preview. 1. Philosophical Foundations of Curriculum Presented By Prof.R.P.Vadhera Department of Education, Mizoram University, Aizawl 2. Introduction Before we proceed further, let us ask ourselves a question. What insights do we gain from the discussion on the philosophical foundations of curriculum'? Foundations of curriculum do not arise in a vacuum. As curriculum development is heavily influenced by philosophy, those involved in such planning should be clear about contemporary, dominant philosophy. If we are unclear about our philosophy of education, our curriculum plans and teaching procedures will tend to be inconsistent and confused. Further, we need to be constantly open to new ideas and insights that may lead to a revision or refinement of our philosophies. Our position should be that no single philosophy, old or new, should serve as the exclusive guide for making decisions about curriculum. What we, as curriculum specialists, need to do, is to adopt an eclectic approach, in which there is no undue emphasis on one particular philosophy. In essence, what we need is a prudent philosophy-one that is politically and economically feasible and that serves the needs of students and society 3. Three Branches of Philosophy Branch Deals with 1. Metaphysics: Deals with reality 2. Epistemology Deals with knowledge 3. Axiology Deals with values 4. Philosophy and Curriculum Introduction: 1. Philosophy provides educators, teachers and curriculum makers with framework for planning, implementing and evaluating curriculum. 2. It helps in answering what educational institutions are for, what subjects are important, how students should learn and what materials and methods should be used. 3. In decision-making, philosophy provides the starting point and will be used for the succeeding decision-making. 4. Studyiof philosophy helps us deal with our own personal systems of beliefs and values, i.e., the way we perceive the world around us and how we define what is important to us. 5. As philosophical issues have always influenced society and institutions of learning, a study of the philosophy of education in terms of Curriculum development is essential. 6. In essence, a philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions and alternatives. 7. Those who are responsible for curricular decisions, therefore, should be clear about what they believe. 8. If we are unclear or confused about our own beliefs, then our curricular plans are bound to be unclear and confusing. Four Major Philosophical Positions Four major philosophical positions that have, hitherto, influenced curriculum development. i) Idealism ii) Realism iii) Pragmatism iv) Existentialism 5. Four Educational Philosophies Relating to curriculum: Eucational Philosophy Area of Focus 1. Perennialism. The focus in the curriculum is classical subjects, literary analysis and considers curriculum as constant. 2. Essentialism. The essential skills of the 3 R's and essential subjects of English, Science, History, Math and Foreign Language is the focus of the curriculum. 3. Progressivism. The curriculum is focused on students' interest, human problems and affairs. The subjects are interdisciplinary, integrative and interactive 4. Reconstructionism. The focus of the curriculum is on present and future trends and issues of national and international interests. 6. Idealism Chief Representatives: Socrates, Plato, Fitche, Hegel, Hume, Kant Nunn and Ross Features: 1. The doctrine of idealism suggests that matter is an illusion and that reality is that which exists mentally. 2. Reality exists as it is experienced. 3. Truth is same today as it was yesterday 4. It emphasizes moral and spiritual reality as the chief explanation of the world and considers moral values absolute, timeless and universal. 5. If we apply this view to education what would be the implications for the role of teachers and curriculum in education? 4. They believe that human behavior is rational, when it conforms to the laws of nature and is governed by social laws. Implications for Curriculum a) Teachers are expected to act as role models of enduring values. a) And the school must be highly structured and should advocate only those ideas that demonstrate enduring values. b) The materials used for instructions, therefore, would centre on broad ideas particularly those contained in great works of literature and/or scriptures. c) Since it is based on broad ideas and concepts, idealism is not in line with the beliefs of those who equate learning with acquisition of specific facts. d) Curriculum should aim at inculcation of three spiritual values: Truth, Beauty and Goodness, theses three values determine three types of activities- intellectual, aesthetic and moral. 7. 2. Realism Features: 1. Concerned with world of ideas and things that are fixed within established subject matter. 2. Theory and principles come first in learning experience , application and practice follow. 'Realists' consider education a matter of reality rather than speculation. Implications for Curriculum: a) The paramount responsibility of the teacher is to impart to learners the knowledge about the world they live in. What scholars of various disciplines have discovered about the world constitutes this knowledge. b) However, like the idealists, the realists too stress that education should reflect permanent and enduring values that have been handed down through generations, but only to the extent that they do not interfere with the study of particular disciplines. c) Unlike the idealists, who consider classics ideal as subject matter for studies, the realists view the subject expert as the source and authority for determining the curriculum. d) Text books and other written materials prepared by experts are important media for helping children learn what they should learn. e) Curriculum should include essential knowledge, not the ‘fads and frills’ 8. 3. Pragmatism Profounders : John Dewey Features: 1. Unlike, i.e., idealism and realism, Pragmatism gives importance to change, processes and relativity. 2. It suggests that the value of an idea lies in its actual consequences. 3. Whatever fulfills one’s purpose and develops one’s life is to be considered as true. 4. Considers learning as an active process, rather than a passive acceptance of facts. 5. Has no absolute values. 6.Knowledge is not at all immutable in a changing world: what is valid today may not be valid tomorrow 7. Analyses the interests of the child into four groups: communication, enquiry, construction, expression. Implications for curriculum a) Curriculum should teach the learners how to think critically rather than what to think. b) It should be child centered. c) What is to be included must have practical effect on students. c) Teaching should, therefore, be more exploratory in nature than explanatory. d) And, learning takes place in an active way as learner solves problems which help them widen the horizons of their knowledge and reconstruct their experiences in consonance with the changing world. e) The role of the teacher should simply be to disseminate information but to construct situations that involve both direct experience with the world of the learner and opportunities to understand these experiences. f) Curriculum should be based on: Utility, Natural interests of children, Child’s own experiences, and integration 9. 4. Existentialism Features: 1. Existentialism has gained greater popularity in recent years. 2. Today, many educationists talk about focusing on the individual, promoting diversity in the curriculum and emphasizing the personal needs and interests of learners. 3. This philosophy emphasizes that there are no values outside human beings, and thus, suggests that human beings should have the freedom to make choices and then be responsible for the consequences of those choices. 4. Existentialists suggest complete autonomy of learner. According to this philosophy, learners should be put into a number of choice-making situations, i.e., learners should be given freedom to choose what to study. 5. It emphasizes that education must centre on the perceptions and feelings of the individual in order to facilitate understanding of personal reactions or responses to life situations. 6. Of primary concern in this process is the individual. Since life is based upon personal meanings, the nature of education, the existentialists would argue, should be largely determined by the learner. 7. What might have been relevant in a particular situation need not necessarily always be so. In essence, social changes demand changes in the existing pattern of education. 9. To plug the gap between the needs of the learner, the society and the curriculum content, rethinking in the area of curriculum development appears to be unavoidable 10. Seldom talk of curriculum goals because they tend to reject universnal or widely acceptable standards. 11. Chief concern is to free the child so that he/she can do his/her own thinking/things. 12. Want children to find their own identities and set their own standards. 13. Tries to free children to choose for themselves what they are to learn and to believe. 10. Implications for Curriculum: a) Individual learners should not be forced into pre-determined programmes of study. b) Whatever the learner feels he/she must learn should be respected and facilitated by the system. c) An existentialist curriculum, therefore, would consist of experiences and subjects that lend themselves to philosophical dialogue and acts of making choices, stressing self-expressive activities and media that illustrate emotions and insights. d) The teacher should have a non-directive role. The teacher should view himself/herself as a partner in the process of learning. e) As a professional, the teacher should serve as a resource facilitator, rather than imposing some predetermined values or interests on learners. 11. Educational philosophies: Although aspects of educational philosophy can be derived from the roots of idealism, realism, pragmatism and existentialism, a common approach is to provide a pattern of educational philosophies which derives from the major schools of philosophy some of which have been touched upon above. Here, we shall be looking into the following four educational philosophies for their implications in the area of curriculum development. i) Perennialism ii) Progressivism iii) Essentialism, and iv) Reconstructionism Let us discuss each one of these in this very order. 12. Perennialism Features 1. It advocates the permanency of knowledge that has stood the test of time and values that have moral and spiritual bases. 2. The underlying idea is that education is constant, absolute and universal. 3. Believes that Cement of education is the common nature of man, and therefore wants to cultivate reason, and intellectual powers. 4. Obviously, "perennialism" in education is born of "idealism" in general philosophy. Implications: a) The curriculum of the perennialist is subject-centered. It draws heavily on defined disciplines or logically organised bodies of content, but it emphasizes teaching leaning of languages, literature, sciences and arts. b) Want to teach subjects in their separate form, e.g. History as histrory, and Chemistry as chemistry. c) Only that subject matter which is considered to be hard is admissble for inclusion in curriculum. d) Emphasize ability to read the classics and other difficult materials. e) The teacher is viewed as an authority in a particular discipline and teaching is considered an art of imparting information knowledge and stimulating discussion. f) In such a scheme of things, students are regarded immature as they lack the judgment required to determine what should be studied, and also that their interests demand little attention as far as curriculum development is concerned. g) There is usually only one common curriculum for all students with little room for elective subjects. h) According to this point of view putting some students through an academic curriculum and others through a vocational curriculum is to deny the latter genuine equality of educational opportunity. 13. Progressivism Features: 1. This emerged as a protest against perennialist thinking in education. 2. It was considered a contemporary reformist movement in educational, social and political affairs during the 1920's and 30's. Implications for Curriculum 1. According to progressivist thought, the skills and tools of learning include problem solving methods and scientific inquiry. 2. In addition, learning experiences should include cooperative behaviour and self- discipline, both of which are important for democratic living. 3. The curriculum, thus, was interdisciplinary in nature and the teacher was seen as a guide for students in their problem-solving and scientific projects. 4. Opposition to the following traditional attributes and practices: a) The authoritarian teacher; b) Excessive dependence on textbook methods; c) Memorization of factual data and learning by excessive drilling; d) Static aims and materials that reject the notion of a changing world; and e) Attempts to isolate education from individual experiences and social reality. Conclusion: a) Although the major thrust of progressive education waned in the 1950's with the advent of "essentialism", the philosophy has left its imprint on education and educational practices of today. b) Contemporary progressivism is expressed in several movements including: Movement for a socially relevant curriculum, and a match between subjects taught and student needs. 14. Essentialism Features: 1. This philosophy, rooted partly in idealism and partly in realism. 2. Evolved mainly as a critique of progressive thought in education. 3. Yet, the proponents of essentialism do not totally reject progressive methods as they do believe that education should prepare the learner to adjust to a changing society. Implications: Thus, in essentialism learning should consist in mastering the subject matter that reflects currently available knowledge in various disciplines. Teachers play a highly directive role by disseminating information to students. According to this viewpoint, the main arms of the institution (be it a school or a college) get sidetracked, when, at the expense of cognitive needs, it attempts to pay greater attention to the social and psychological problems of students. Conclusion: In recent years, the essentialist position has been stated vociferously by critics who claim that educational standards softened during the 1960s and early 1970s. The most notable achievements of the essentialists have been: a) the widespread implementation of competency based programmes, b) the establishment of grade-level achievement standards, and c) the movement to reemphasize academic subjects in schools/colleges. In many ways, the ideas of essentialism lie behind attacks on the quality of education by the media and by local pressure groups, which includes, to a good extent, attacks on distance education. 15. Reconstructionism Features: It views education as a means of reconstructing society. Put school in the forefront in remaking society Believe that as school/college is attended by virtually all youth, it must be used as a means to shape the attitudes and values of each generation. As a result, when the youth become adults they will share certain common values, and thus the society will have reshaped itself. Implications: 1.As for the curriculum, it must promote new social, economic and political education. 2.The subject matter is to be used as a vehicle for studying social problems which must serve as the focus of the curriculum. 3. The following gives us a view of the reconstructionist programme of education: a) critical examination of the cultural heritage of a society as well as the entire civilization; b) scrutiny of controversial issues; c) commitment to bring about social and constructive change; d) enhancement of cultural renewal and internationalism. 4. Teachers in this school will break precedents if necessary , to rebuild the culture. 5. Involve pipils, parents and community in planning to fuse sources of formal education with political, social and economic resources to better human life and conditions. 6. . Curriculum advocated by deconstructionists emphasizes the social sciences-history, political science, economics, sociology, psychology and philosophy-and not the pure sciences. 7. Thrust is on developing individual self-realization and freedom through cognitive and intellectual activities, and thus, on liberating people from the restrictions, limitations and controls of society. 8. The idea is that we have had enough of discipline-based education and narrow specialization, and that we don't need more specialists now, we need more "good" people if we want to survive. Group life should be a centre of school experience as groups can better achieve the purpose of reconstruction of socity. 16. Conclusion Before we proceed further, let us ask ourselves a question. What insights do we gain from the discussion on the philosophical foundations of curriculum'? Foundations of curriculum do not arise in a vacuum. As curriculum development is heavily influenced by philosophy, those involved in such planning should be clear about contemporary, dominant philosophy. If we are unclear about our philosophy of education, our curriculum plans and teaching procedures will tend to be inconsistent and confused. This being so, we should be aware of the fact that development and awareness of a personal philosophy of education is a crucial professional responsibility. Further, we need to be constantly open to new ideas and insights that may lead to a revision or refinement of our philosophies. Our position should be that no single philosophy, old or new, should serve as the exclusive guide for making decisions about curriculum. What we, as curriculum specialists, need to do, is to adopt an eclectic approach, in which there is no undue emphasis on one particular philosophy. In essence, what we need is a prudent philosophy-one that is politically and economically feasible and that serves the needs of students and society 17. On the basis of above discussion it can be concluded that philosophy has entered into every important decision that has ever been made about curriculum in the past and will continue to be the basis of every important decision in the future. All decision relating to selection of curriculum objectives, selection of content & learning activities, organization of content, selection of instructional procedures etc. are directly or indirectly influenced by philosophy. a) When state department of education takes any decision relating to pupil teachers time schedule, this is based upon philosophy. b) When we shift subject matter from lower grade to higher grade, we act on philosophy. c) When a elementary school gives more time to science and math in its time table, it is acting on a philosophy as it is has decided to give more value to these subjects. There is rarely a moment in a school day when a teacher is not confronted with occasions where philosophy is a vital part of action. An inventory of situations where philosophy was not used in curriculum and teaching would lead to a pile of chaff thrown out of educative experiences.

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