

ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT FACTORS OF EDUCATION FROM THE POSTMODERNISM VIEWPOINT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE APPROACHES OF MICHEL FOUCAULT AND JACQUES DERRIDA

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Introduction

The postmodern outlook developed new viewpoints in education, the same way it introduced new topics and issues in various fields such as arts, philosophy, and literature. As the educational concepts of each era are often influenced by particular intellectual and philosophical ideas of the time, it is essential to identify the philosophical basics of postmodernism and its impact on important factors of education. These factors include teaching approaches, educational tools and facilities, curriculums and contents, and school management. It can be asserted that Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida were the main exegetes of postmodernism. At the same time, postmodernism has been influenced by these two philosophers, and this study is first going to take a brief look at their educational ideas and then discuss the characteristics of educational factors in the postmodern system.

The beginning of postmodernism was signified by approaches of Nietzsche and his followers. They believed that with the idea of “the death of God” the divine vision is gone as well. Traditional thinkers have rejected this notion and are indeed, captives of illusions on universal judgments about the recognition of God and a perfect society. Postmodern thinkers accepted Nietzsche’s approaches and insisted that each field has its particular criterion, and consequently, each belief is justified according to its criteria. Heidegger elaborated his attitudes in wane; however, this decline would lead to an opportunity for development, not an eventual cease. Ideas of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are also influenced by Heidegger [1].

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Michel Foucault believes that four principles play a critical role in his researches:

1. The principle of reversal: According to his beliefs, reversal includes things a human being may put in mind by assumption of an inverse concept; i.e. when particular interpretations of a historical event are presented by a tradition or doctrine, one can develop a new attitude for it by exchange, planning and interpretation and it becomes possible to raise new horizons and perspectives.
2. The principle of discontinuity: He believes that each wisdom notion belonging to a particular element should be determined by its respective logical criteria of the specific generation, and systems of inference and discourse cannot be applied in other eras.
3. Principle of specificity: Based to Foucault's beliefs, the world can in no way make sense of or decipher a particular discourse by a prior system of significations, let alone interpret it to our language. He states that each era has its specific characteristics and accordingly, any steady principles are ought to be avoided.
4. Principle of exteriority: We should not seek reaching the hidden internal core, i.e. the heart of a discourse; rather, discourses must be taken as a basis and understood by their external conditions of existence in order to clarify the series of consecutive events [2].

Foucault states that realities are originated from power relations; therefore, there are no stabilized realities to be fundamentals for education. He believes that power generates knowledge and power and knowledge impact directly on one another. No power relation exists without being accompanied by a knowledge structure and no knowledge is realizable without the existence of a power relation [3]. Foucault believes that discipline and punishment are aimed at subjugating students. In modernism, classes breed students as introverts, whereas in order to prepare the students for globalized education system, initiative and creative human beings are needed, but this objective cannot be met by introvert and submissive students.

Jacques Derrida describes "the self" as a secretive atrium in which written secrets are hidden and in order to unlock it, its centralization and pragmatism need to be deconstructed and accordingly, through this pass-way, its secretive concept can be figured out. The explanation of the self by Derrida lacks any pre-defined properties. Derrida believes in a moral type, in which neither absolute goodness, nor absolute faultiness may be found, but it is indeed a rational variable that depends on the particular individual, circumstances, environment, or social conditions [4].

Amongst the applicable theories of Derrida regarding education, the following can be mentioned:

1. Avoidance of generalization of a context;
2. Avoidance of applying sensational and absolute statements;
3. Rejection of duality and binary divide, such as men versus women, speech versus writing where always the first is prioritized over the second. Derrida rejects this polarization and prioritization;
4. Permanent meanings and concepts should not be pursued in education [1].

The postmodern of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, while opposing modernism, allows educators and individuals dealing with education to have a more complex and logical point of view about social, cultural, political, and economical relations. Postmodern education focuses on things that modern education did not achieve. Given the characteristics of modern education which include: rationalism, human-based, secularism, universalism, reality-based, ultra-narrative, and lexical-oriented; features that coordinated education did not achieve seem achievable through globalization in education. Postmodern education has been created for preventing the extremism of modern education; such extremisms as standardization, structuralism, treating textbooks as if they are heavenly revelations, and extreme control from authorities.

Postmodern educators believe that contents and curriculum of modern education occupy the minds and actions of participants of the modern school and consequently, prevent them from having deep thoughts. This situation is especially manifested when teachers transfer contents to the students without any regard to their cognitive abilities; whereas postmodern educators depart from the role of disseminators, approach the knowledge creativity and simplify the learning process for classes and groups. Accordingly, learning procedures replace contents and curriculum [5].

Regarding teaching approaches, the emphasis on communal education and motivation of collaborative learning, interpersonal interactions and working groups can be mentioned. Students are not some machines that simply collect concepts based on a particular perspective. They are learners who build their identities and knowledge by participation and learning. Learning is not just transferring knowledge from its holders to others, but it is also, indeed, membership in a cultural movement and social participation. Hence, the concept of school is best described as an educational community, where the learning aspect of the society is sought.

In response to the question how can one become a postmodern educator, Peter November states that while modern teaching approaches emphasize experience, he prescribes simulation, where a great deal of experience can be found. Simulating gives the students opportunities through which they get to see and emotionally feel the effects of their own decisions. November insists on reality-based learning by which students can touch the problems. According to his method, the teacher's task is enabling a student to discover his or her own approach to learning [6].

Kincheloe contends that the meta-analysis of 'thinking about thinking' as an appropriate approach to teaching, by the help of which students can think about whatever they hear or read and derive new interpretations from that. He promotes the thinking that knowledge is created by students themselves and teachers help students with having a contemplation of their own life in order to discover their talents. He underscores the students' and teachers' self-reflection, avoiding the focus on the experiences of the dominant groups, rejection of the adopted standards and insisting on cognition rather than memorizing [7].

In postmodern school, the emphasis is student-oriented and in this regard Foucault has a "no authority" approach, believing that the relationship between teachers and students is horizontal and therefore, teachers should take notice of the differences between the students' lives, interests, and needs, and should not seek imposition of their own opinions [3].

Besides, postmodern teaching approaches are based on deconstruction, whereby teachers encourage students to study contradictions and contrasts, lose their reluctance towards these issues and hence, develop their own analytical skills [1].

Regarding educational tools and facilities, nowadays, the role of communication technologies in simplifying data transmission is obvious to almost everyone. These technologies render the opportunity to communicate in the shortest time and have led to the new settings referred to as 'Globalization.' It can be stated that emergence of the globalization phenomenon is a consequence of technology and innovation. Possessing awareness and information, embarking on advance and innovation are among the major factors for development and undoubtedly, a logical relation exists between these processes and use of educational systems [8].

McCormick and Scrimshaw in their article on information and communications technology talk about the omnipresent computer interactions that are typical to postmodernism. These interactions provide the possibility of infinite multipurpose relations to learners and their continuity helps formation of innumerable small communities in schools [9].

An advanced technology like Internet directs information highways from universities to primary schools and renders new opportunities to practice new democracies in which all cultures are able to advocate and disseminate their critiques and attitudes. Internet has cleared off the classroom frames and made it simple to cross their boundaries.

Patterns of classes in modernism, such as the special place for teachers, front blackboard, serial placement of students in a row, and ordered placement of benches and chairs imply that teachers own the students and students recognize that. This structure is not compatible with postmodern system, as in postmodern schools the arrangement of the classroom varies based on the subject.

It can also be noted that the scientific exploration and learning are of great importance in postmodern schools.

Regarding curriculums and contents: These factors should invite individuals to take a forthcoming stance. Curriculum should seek an evolutionary education resulting in the motivation of hoping to explore and discover. Besides, awareness and sensitivity toward environmental issues is an incontrovertible part of proposals introduced by postmodern curriculums. The objective of unifying and strengthening the teacher-learner and context-reader relations are to be attained by postmodern curriculums through a dialogue based on negotiation and interaction.

Curriculums based on postmodern notions should not be exclusive and centralized, but rather enable everyone to hear different voices that are usually forgotten. For this purpose, curriculum should be flexible, compatible, and participatory.

Efland argues that in arts, philosophy and similar fields an appropriate school curriculum should not focus on big stories that put the knowledge in a general form. He advocates small stories in which knowledge is presented in the form of individual and personal intuitions and local experience [1].

William Doll believes that postmodern curriculum has special characteristics that fit in the framework of life concepts, and that openness, variation, compatibility, and continuous adjustment is amongst its features. In postmodernism discussion of information takes place rather than dealing with knowledge, whereas information is temporary, changes constantly and lacks pragmatism [1].

Regarding educational management: Perhaps the best substitute for the idea of management in schools is the term 'leadership', which points to the level of influence on others. In postmodern schools, the leadership degree does not depend on information level, administrative position, gender or race; rather, it actually relies on

psychological and personality traits and ability to influence through discourse. In postmodern system, the decision making is not an individual process and no one can perform this task alone, but in fact, group norms, working structure, and personal expectations affect it.

According to Clegg, postmodern organizations are flexible and take into account work integration, lack of separation, obtaining general skills and encourage their employees to become creative and flexible in order to be able to interact with the surrounding environment [10].

School management is based on self-control, internal flexibility, and long-term objectives. Postmodern schools oppose specialty-orientation, regularity, repetition and division of the tasks, but it is a network of variety, self-leadership, and self-control so that individuals direct their behaviors based on the requirements of circumstances.

The following table briefly summarizes the four important educational elements.

Indicator	Features of Important Indicators in Postmodern Education System
Teaching Approaches	Emphasis on arguments and democratic approaches; Communal and cooperative learning approach; Dialogue and meta-analysis; Emphasis on deconstruction and simulation; Decentralization; Student-oriented and creative-based.
Educational Tools and Facilities	Audio and visual equipment in teaching, particularly the Internet/ computers and equipping schools with laboratories. The possibility of changing the arrangement of the class based on the subject; Excursions and exploration.
Curriculums and Contents	Curriculum based on evolutionary development; Noticing the individual differences; The possibility of multi-dimensional interpretation of the context; Interdisciplinary curriculum, Cooperative curriculum; Avoiding general concepts; Practical and applied knowledge, Flexible programs; Giving attention to communal culture.
Educational Management	Horizontal relations, People-oriented; Long-term goals, Self-control Research-oriented with emphasis on research actions.

Studying the characteristics of the postmodern education system, it can be understood that education is not a simple transmission of beliefs and values from one generation to another, but it should be a basis for raising questions and re-interpretation.

Postmodernists tend to build cooperation with an emphasis on dialogue-oriented approach and assert that while reviewing a context critically, one can figure out new perspectives. An emphasis on interdisciplinary science prevents drawing limits and such an approach results in a transition from the concept of society to that of community. In this kind of communities the schools not just insist on exactly pre-defined rational relationships, but in contrast to the range of regular school activities emphasize the aesthetical and emotional aspects of communal activities.

Postmodernists believe that schools should not seek training obedient and profitable individuals through applying discipline in order to teach them based on the government's viewpoint, but instead, schools ought to teach students resistance and motivate them to endeavor and fight throughout their lifetime.

Generally, the postmodern student-oriented education system sets an environment for social interactions, researches, independent studies and formation of creativity, as well as introduction of various learning approaches.

February, 2011

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