

Prospects of Philosophy of Education for the Concept of Responsible Citizenship in the 21st Century

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Since time immemorial, many philosophical systems and schools of thought have viewed the intellectual nurturing of active, mentally, and spiritually developed individuals as their primary tasks. Accordingly, the authors of this article set the goal of elaborating some of the interconnected (philosophical and pedagogical) notions embedded in employing a problem-based teaching methodology as a guiding tool for the implementation of a nationwide educational reform aimed at supplying a fresh alternative to more perennial and didactic modes of instruction in need of serious review. The latter, in our opinion, proves to be extremely counterproductive to the genuinely Socratic method at the heart of the European and global educational spirit and practice. In contrast to predominantly mechanical accumulation and transmission prevalent in Post-Soviet teaching methodology, inquiry-based education is suggested as an efficient cumulative approach necessary to achieve a beneficial functional dialectic allowing students to combine guided instruction with self-actualization as active members of a modern, sustainable society. When properly executed, problem-based learning is able to closely mimic real-life scenarios of issues arising in the process of civic engagement by cultivating an active knowledge acquisition attitude among the general public. Equipped with an efficacious know-what and know-how, such social actors are able to pursue civic virtues by coming up with ways to resolve social issues having acquired a broad educational skill set while fostering the constantly evolving personal and professional learning competencies.

As the Ukrainian educational system enters a critically important era, ever more swiftly plotting its course towards a European pedagogical paradigm, a paramount role should be assigned to the efforts of reorganizing and reforming of our educational establishments, from kindergartens to Ph.D. programs. Consequently, our educators on all levels require a clear, structured vision of the philosophy that will inspire, underpin and guide this successful impetus away from the ineffective and ideology-laden remnants of the post-Soviet system and towards embracing globally recognized values and educational principles at the heart of progressive responsible citizenship. At the same time, the authors wish to caution that in pursuing this path, our educational system (if we aim to raise and improve the scope and quality of civic engagement) cannot simply change one set of overarching markers for another but must undertake an incremental approach to building up the general level of democratic, political and social awareness and adroitness.

Keywords: philosophy of education, inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, responsible citizenship, social development

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Introduction

Without a doubt, pedagogy and philosophy are equally preoccupied with nurturing a well-balanced (intellectually and emotionally) fulfilled human being, directing their respective efforts (though at times by taking different routes) to the formation of our spiritual and mental world. While shaping the commonly inherited cultural background, philosophically inspired pedagogy equips us with the necessary knowledge, tools, and strategies to harmonize and improve our general societal prosperity and cooperation. Still, the question arises, i.e., precisely how and on what basis does such an organic combination of practical teaching approaches and techniques come into a fruitful synthesis with the overarching philosophy guiding its development and enhancement, and what function does it perform concerning civic duties and virtues, as well as how exactly does it change in historical perspective over time adapting to the mores, ethos and dominant political and socio-economic coordinates of the prevalent *Zeitgeist*? A brief glance at the history of both subjects, viz. the history of philosophy coupled with a review of the prominent pedagogical movements and schools, gives grounds for the conclusion that a majority of the outstanding educators were usually famous philosophers and, vice versa, virtually every great philosopher, as a rule, necessarily complemented a grandiose vision of their philosophical system with ethics, basing it on a doctrine of morality, whereby the latter was oftentimes in direct correlation with a particular theory of education.

In studying the works of Thales and Democritus, Socrates and Plato, Aristotle and Parmenides, we come across a clear trend that later came to characterize the philosophical outlook of their numerous successors, namely concern with exploring and furthering the individual's cognitive capacities in search of the ultimate truth as well as to working out in a more practical vein how such discoveries can benefit a particular community while bringing a rational balance, prosperity, and cohesion to society at large. Thus, it is easy to see that the ethical views of these thinkers are as much in the realm of pure theoretical pedagogy as they inform things of a more practical nature, having been directly concerned with the fate of man, his education and upbringing, expressed categorically and systematized following the philosophical predilections and sociocultural milieu of their day (Siegel, 2020).

Hence, on closer inspection, it becomes evident that our Western philosophical tradition, with its rise marked by the unprecedented level of cultural and concomitant intellectual ascent during the Hellenic period, developed philosophical views of education that were embedded in the broader metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and political theories of the aforementioned ancient Greek thinkers. In particular, the introduction by Socrates of his “Maieutic method” of dialectical questioning laid the foundation for a profound tradition in which reasoning and the search for an intellectual basis relied on to justify beliefs, judgments, and actions was (and remains) a fundamental pillar of Western educational thought and teaching philosophy. Working out the answers and searching for a systematic methodology eventually gave rise to the view that education should encourage in all of us, to the greatest extent possible, the pursuit of a life of rational thought, discourse, and action. This view of the central place of reason in educational theory and practice has been shared by most of the major figures in the history of philosophy of education, regardless of the otherwise substantial differences in their (at times diametrically opposite) philosophical views. Therefore, Plato endorsed the view that a fundamental task of education is helping students to value and be guided in all our endeavors (individual or public) by reason, which for him involved valuing wisdom above pleasure, honor, and other baser appetites and pursuits. Accordingly, In the *Republic*, he set out a vision of education in which different groups of students would receive varying sorts of education, depending on their abilities, interests, and stations in life. Many see this utopian vision as a precursor of what has come to be called educational sorting (Curren, 2007: 17-18).

In a similar vein, many centuries later, John Dewey argued that education should be tailored to the individual capacities and talents of a particular learner while, at the same time, rejecting Plato’s hierarchical sorting of students into socially-relevant task-based categories. In its present state, the aforementioned pedagogical philosophy of inquiry-based learning originated in the 1960s as part of the discovery learning movement. From the very beginning, its proponents positioned it as an alternative to the more conservative forms of teaching (i.e., direct instruction and rote training), which relied primarily on memorization and reproduction of knowledge from established sources of canonical expertise and wisdom. Much inspired by the critical reevaluation of the scientific enterprise and method by Imre Lakatos, Thomas Kuhn, and Karl Popper, constructivist educational philosophy dates back to the works of such renowned figures as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Paolo Freire, and Lev Vygotsky. Following the fruitful development of the constructivist ideology, Joseph Schwab encouraged learners to form and indulge in their personal academic preferences, criticized undergraduate education as a compendium of ineffective, intellectually stagnant ready-made approaches, argued against outmoded scholarly rhetoric and modes of instruction, urging students to extend their academic interests beyond the walls of their respective educational institutions and into the public forum. Beginning in the early 1970s, Schwab’s demarcation of inquiry-based pursuits into three distinct levels was formalized by Marshall Herron. He developed the Herron Scale to assess the amount and level of inquiry-based and problem-solving engagement within a particular laboratory setting and/or exercise (Cam, 2020). Subsequently, following a renewed interest in the tangible benefits of constructivist educational philosophy applicable to the goals of a wider social education agenda, the field of alternative pedagogics has witnessed a proliferation of assisted exploratory knowledge acquisition methodologies.

The Rational Underpinnings of the Responsible Citizenship Theory

In recent times, a growing number of authors have applied the language of successful educational philosophy to civic life by referring to collectively achieved innovation as a direct result of social learning. Due to the fact societies are swiftly growing in their complexity and organizational intricacy, those trying to deal with this multi-faceted phenomenon must learn a good deal about the content of the problems they are examining in order to arrive at successful solution strategies. In particular, environmental philosophy and climate change problems are prime examples of the multi-layered complexity civic activists grapple with guided by the shared agenda and wisdom of overcoming impending ecological crises. No less philosophically problematic and daunting are the questions of how people of different class, racial and ethnic backgrounds arrive at a synergistic social organization, managing to live and work together towards preventing and eliminating natural catastrophes and societal ills. Indeed, once people become involved in such crucial issues as the environment, educating our youth, or raising the general well-being and healthcare level, the interactive process of coming to grips with these matters creates the so-called hidden learning communities. In particular, many community groups are filled with autodidactic members who have acquired significant teaching expertise by investing their intellectual resources into raising their own research techniques and knowledge acquisition capacities.

Consequently, much of the learning that transpires in community groups like these is problem-centered and mission-oriented. While individuals may become intrinsically interested in particular aspects of a given social issue and pursue effective resolution strategies beyond what is needed to arrive at a successful, satisfactory solution, from a philosophical perspective, the search for knowledge is drastically pertinent to specific community needs (Gamson, 1997: 10-11). The problems themselves, complex and multi-faceted as they may appear, are equally puzzling if we try to account for their multidisciplinary nature. Specifically, as such, they cannot typically be solved by a single approach or a unified organizational (or governmental) decree prescribed from above but instead have to factor in the role of technology, rapidly evolving nascent trends in a global economy with its concomitant educational qualifications and shifting requirements, as well as to account for the legislative sphere of a particular educational philosophy implementation.

As well have seen, the process of incorporating a particular social pedagogic platform is a necessarily diverse set of individuals and organizations uniting under a single banner all social groups and categories: young and old, middle-class and poor, experts and non-experts, men and women, gay and straight, white and non-white, immigrant and citizen, urban and rural people. Consequently, all these disparate individual and collective social actors are assumed to have certain strengths and capacities, personal and social assets. It is, furthermore, presupposed that if society as a whole is engaged in a civic project, each of its mereological components has something of value to contribute to the realization of the desired social status quo. In such a society, relationships among individuals and organizations are collaborative, which means that groups that may not be accustomed to collaborating eventually work out the necessary means of arriving at mutually beneficial outcomes. Often, these cooperative networks are unstable, with ample opportunities for discord, whereby disparity is negated by engaging in civic partnership and coalition-building. Another major key to the success of these collaborative enterprises is the necessity of dialogue – a trait frequently found in descriptions of socially cohesive individuals who show high levels of

social commitment. An equally crucial point to consider is the matter of how exactly do our educational institutions: primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities relate to the issue of raising the general bar of the educational landscape not only for its students but educators as well (Schultz, 2016: 3). Accordingly, much of what the authors have outlined up to this point has to do with areas outside the purview of higher education and is left to the transformative initiative of grassroots organizations, private social, religious and educational organizations, local self-government groups and enthusiast communities, labor unions, as well as spontaneous private business initiatives. In fact, experience shows that we rarely find a genuinely proactive stance towards framing and exercising the underlying educational philosophy demonstrated by specialized technical and/or vocational schools, colleges and universities, as pedagogical institutions are predominantly engaged in following their national or regionally demarcated regulatory scripts and curriculums.

Undoubtedly, many among the Western academic and philosophical communities who hold and express similar views about the decline of democracy and community, as well as those who are more optimistic about the vitality of the philosophical foundations fueling the progress and development of cultured, educated civic life, are faculty members in leading universities. Even less visible are the large numbers of individual faculty members and administrators in colleges and universities who, as the intellectual and moral lifeblood of our centers of learning, ought to take a firmer stance and be more involved in the project of social education and life of their communities, either personally or through informing and directing their students' social activity, often fail to impart the necessary philosophical framework and pedagogical tools necessitated for enlightened social maturity. As Francisco Uribe aptly puts it – the key issue is that the relic of a Rawlsian liberal citizen is a schematic ghost of a long-bygone analog era. Hence, Rawls's brand of civic reasonableness may have worked wonders in a pre-internet world, where the main problem was to agree on a framework of justice and what constitutes a responsible public stance everyone could broadly support regardless of espousing diverging privately held convictions. Accordingly, the price one had to pay in the pre-Internet era for securing a stable social and institutional setup that safeguarded civic and political liberty was the paramount goal, even if achieving it meant keeping our deeply held beliefs out of politics and rational civic discourse (Uribe, 2021).

Not so in our present-day hyper-connected reality, where even if one goes to great lengths in one's effort to be socially reasonable, presenting a thought-through, logical position, there is still a significant risk of being trampled by vociferous herds attempting to reshape the social landscape according to their own cultural pet peeves and skewed political agenda. Thus, all attempts at a Habermasian type rational communicative consensus would quickly be overwhelmed by a floodgate of various media platforms, social justice crusaders with their half-baked hyper-sensitive slogan-like debate tactics. Simply put, when it comes to presenting a firmly argued stance, the novel ICT reality seems to paradoxically harbor an implicit deep-seated disdain for all things rational and deliberative.

Thus, we are witnessing a major trend whereby in the public discussion, there is a growing number of people keeping their deeply held beliefs private (oftentimes, for fear of judgment) while tolerating those of others as a reflection of the irrational, disproportionate, and deeply flawed public discourse status quo. Indeed, in recent years the tables have turned so dramatically that asking people to be reasonable, as paradoxically as it may sound, may prove to be entirely unreasonable (Howell & Brossard, 2021). Moreover, if exercising one personal intellectual biases based on an antiquated rational individual model cannot be substantiated and is not viable in a present-day global village, what are the alternatives

to a fair public deliberative forum? The authors believe that due to the intricate and fast-paced nature of global societal transformation, answering this question is no easy task, and would at present reserve themselves to pointing out just a few cornerstone prerequisites for fashioning and maintaining the broad, philosophical remarks of the project of responsible citizenry. In particular, drawing on the Western pragmatist intellectual tradition, represented primarily by the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, we maintain that to divorce the concept of civic responsibility and reasonableness from its inadequate Rawlsian direction exercised on a purely conceptual level, any attempt at rational educational philosophy needs to actively strive towards raising the bar for public discourse guidelines by emphasizing the need for sustained logical argumentation, intellectual flexibility and autonomy. Accordingly, the authors are in agreement that a successful recalibration of the said educational philosophy must necessarily be backed by sound inculcating a critical-thinking skill set to be achieved through introducing a structured, well-defined framework to serve as a guideline in all manner of civic pursuits and spheres of social education.

Shaping and Assessing the Aims of the Educational Impact on Responsible Citizenry Facilitation

As has been noted, it is essential to rely on a structured, well-defined metric to assess the tasks before our ongoing national educational reform. One such potential approach is the conception of Responsible Citizenship proposed by the European Commission. Based on the programmatic document of the same name, the initiative is centered around a six high-level objectives approach, with several recommendations associated with the specific functions and indicative actions corresponding to each objective and are appropriately identified for implementation at either the general EU or member state level. Hence, the suggested Framework of Science Education for Responsible Citizenship provides a powerful tool-kit for concrete steps and programs called upon to bring about systemic, synergistic, and sustainable benefits for a collective, nationwide impact. To have the proper effect, they require a unified vision and a shared sense of accountability, responsibility, and innovation by all of society's stakeholders. This includes primary and secondary schools as well as further and higher educational institutions, families, teachers, and students, autonomous knowledge-gaining enterprises, and business, public and civil society organizations. The initiative, likewise, involves all members of the European Union, at local, regional, national and E.U. level, acting together in a concerted, cohesive and integrated way (European Commission, 2015).

Given the multi-faceted nature of the objectives and recommendations, it is strongly recommended that the European Commission brings together key actors from within itself to initiate and facilitate a participatory consultation and dialogue process across the E.U. regarding documenting the proposed actions and how they should be implemented with concrete educational environments. In particular, one of the key responsibilities of the European Commission is to utilize the data gathered in the report to build and enhance national-level as well as foster communal and regional synergies and cooperation across portfolios in order to lead to tangible, sustainable results in educating diversely composed categories of the citizenry. Collaboration and networking between the different communities across the E.U. can equally provide important opportunities to enrich the lives of European citizens through sustained, concentrated social education programs. Finally, the European Commission should also strive to implement a comprehensive dissemination program, combining workshops, leaflets, awareness events, audio, video, film, community theater,

and other formats geared towards engaging citizens in the understanding of philosophical issues involved in and appreciation of the scientific and other aspects of their shared social dimension. In addition, the initiative urges a framing of an accompanying public communications strategy developed to refine and reinforce the crux of the comprehensive social education message presented in the policy paper. At the same time, the educational policy analysis undertaken in the European Commission's Report "Science Education for Responsible Citizenship" demonstrates not only the pragmatic dimension of the need for educational transformation based on science education (matching the job market demands, etc.) but also asserts the potential of (science) education in the context of providing learners with real tools for active citizenship, inclusion in the processes of civilizational progress in terms of innovation by helping them to become real participants of socio-economic and sociocultural transformation processes in our Industry 4.0 age

As these developments quicken pace, there is a much greater appreciation of the necessity to involve an entire pool of human resources and talent, placing new demands on our governments, educational institutions, businesses, and civil organizations to meet the evolving needs of the ever-shifting nature of society and the dynamic developments of the 21st-century workplace. Of equal importance is the situation of the much-depleted pool of existing resources at the heart of all social development: energy, environment, food, water, housing, communication, social cohesion, and culture. To meet these scientific and technological challenges, and in accordance with the formulated philosophy of sustainable development, the European Union has adopted a strategy based on three key components: smart growth (fostering knowledge, innovation, education, and digital society), sustainable growth (making our production more resource efficient while boosting our competitiveness) and inclusive growth (raising participation in the labor market, the acquisition of skills and the fight against poverty). It is important to note that our success in meeting these objectives is linked to the ability of our societies to educate smart, creative, and entrepreneurial individuals with the necessary confidence and capability to think autonomously and critically, engage in lifelong learning projects, as well as the ability to generate new knowledge, social and technological innovation while being able to utilize and adapt to technological change (European Commission, 2015). Becoming a successful reality requires significant input from all our citizens who are properly taught how to exercise their competencies and confidence, engaging in various active citizenship initiatives.

The Modern Synthesis of Public Policy and Educational Philosophy

Regardless of the specific factors at play when engaging in civic education, its prominent persons are always involved in a learning/ mutually enriching process between teachers and their students. While the former appears mainly as a carrier of socially relevant knowledge, beneficial and acceptable attitudes, experience, and culture, the latter must put this acquired knowledge into practice by seeking the harmonization and enhancement of social relations and capital. It should be noted that when perceived through the prism of social relations, such a knowledge exchange is not a one-sided transaction but equally affects the intellectual capital dialectic of any society, transforming its spiritual world, outlook, and culture. This crux of perennial educational wisdom, which came down to us from the times of Socrates and his deliberative educational philosophy, is what still undergirds the foundation of Western teaching philosophy and methodology. Viewed through the societal prism, the modern educational philosophy is geared towards the intellectual nurturing and upbringing

of the younger generation, which our educators are called upon to equip and facilitate with a proactive, democratic learning environment that transcends the classroom and is deeply embedded within the fabric of our shared communal and national ways of cooperation and development (Zainuddin, 2017). As was previously argued, this calls for a clear provision that the designated process has a characteristically social character, that is, it is carried out in society at large through our commonly elected legislative and government institutions whose task is to legitimize and implement a roadmap for a structured program of a nationwide educational philosophy while at the same time working towards concrete ways to achieve such an ambitious vision of a wholesale educational reform from the ground up.

It is important to note that when assessed on a purely philosophical plane, regardless of the individual forms this phenomenon may take, having to instantiate itself (partially or fully) through a particular historical type of society, culture, and/or subculture, in essence, only society as a unified body civic and politic comprised of numerous developmental projects and vectors, in its democratic collective aspiration may determine the orientation, priorities and values, purpose and way of its educational setup and makeup. Finally, there is the question of the role of critical thinking in education. We have already suggested that all courses, whether in primary, secondary, or tertiary education, need to be taught in such a way as to encourage critical thinking in those subjects. Indeed, this opinion is so common in such areas as the social sciences as to be fairly uncontroversial. What I would add, however, is that critical thinking should be added to the curriculum as an independent course. Without a separate course that teaches the generic aspects of critical thinking, it will be difficult for teachers in particular disciplines to convey to their students why critical thinking is essential. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized, however, that there is nothing in the practice of critical thinking that does not already exist in some form or other in the practice of philosophy, even if there is an enormous amount in philosophy that does not bear a direct relation to critical thinking (Philips, 2010). Hence, it is the professed belief of the authors of this article that the best way to involve students in the pressing needs of modern society is to do away with the more traditional, academic philosophy of the university, engage in narrative, experimental and interactive philosophy that emphasizes dialogue, deliberation, and the strengthening of judgment, critical thinking faculties among students and citizens alike all of which fruitfully benefits the various modes of communal discourse and *Lebenswelt*.

Conclusions

In our closing statements, we believe it is essential to reiterate the broader productive features of implementing a systematic approach to inquiry-based education throughout the entire educational system in Ukraine. Moreover, we are convinced that when properly employed, the potential of a well-defined nationwide educational agenda can lead to remarkable gains in the teaching process both domestically and worldwide. By bringing class activity in line with the demands of modern interactive education, teachers who follow the previously outlined postulates on imparting knowledge through discovery are bound to achieve a significant increase in the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of building up of critical, problem-based potential coupled with other autonomous-inquiry skills among their student body. The authors are, therefore, convinced that the road to the development of a person-centered philosophy of civic engagement is closely tied to facilitating a shared, communal learning environment through a structured, incrementally implemented educational agenda that can be genuinely conducive to a guaranteed acquisition of a flexible learning tool set, enabling students to take advantage of the latest learning approaches

through an updated, student-friendly methodology and technological innovation. When perceived as a socially grounded approach, the crux of the responsible citizenship philosophy provides ample productive application, not just in purely academic settings. Still, it bears remarkable societal gains since our knowledge is always socially directed and mediated. As such, it allows educators to enrich their curriculum with positive, socially-relevant themes, empowering students to engage and take action by tackling topics such as global warming, economic instability, and raising and improving healthcare and living standards.

Viewed as facilitators of a stimulating learning environment, modern-day educators employing inquiry-based methodology can positively impact the teaching practice by instilling a sense of responsibility and ownership in their students. Such changes are becoming especially relevant in our globalized society and education system, where teachers (if they wish to continue to be effective) are becoming increasingly challenged with the need to transform autocratic instruction stereotypes by combining the essential with the progressive. Naturally, if the aforementioned enterprise is to be in any way relevant to the aims of such a progressive philosophy of education it should be supported by a well-defined, structured base that is currently been made a major focus of our national educational philosophy. What seems especially pressing in terms of an intricate analysis is tracing the precise way an inquiry-based paradigm ties into the need to produce a new type of educator expected to democratize the learning process, balancing the needs of an open investigative mode of knowledge acquisition with the demands of more conventional academic approaches and requirements still holding sway over the mainstream national pedagogic philosophy, theory, and practices.

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