Historical Movement of Humanistic Education: The Process of Personality Development

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Abstract

People can learn best if they work with their interest and initiation, and find a conducive and respectful humane environment where their self-actualization towards the learning process takes place. The environment involves empathetic and inspiring behaviour of teachers, experiential learning, and interesting content. In the present Nepalese context, they are not in reach of students due to the influence of the teacher-centered model over educators, which has been a great concern in addressing the students' personal growth. However, it could be achieved through humanistic education that promotes self-directed learning. This paper discusses the theoretical aspects of humanistic knowledge, including past studies and literature, and its practice in Nepalese school education. Based on the survey, also explores and suggests ways to treat the learners in a humanistic manner.

Keywords*: Humanistic education, self-directed, self-actualization, non-threatening, personal growth*

Introduction

Humanity is declining due to unfair competition among people in the fast-changing world (DeRobertis, 2013). In this dynamic world; democracy, human rights, and individual freedom are the major concerns of people in every aspect of life including education (Kirchschlaeger, 2014). In education, many models are developed and practiced against the teacher-centered model ("Major Theories and Models of Learning," n.d.). Along with it, people realized the need for education for humanity. Learners are humanly treated; and their dignity, capacity, and interest are empathetically respected (Barrow & Woods, 2006; Aloni, 2007; Rogers; 1980). For this purpose, the concept of humanistic education models based on humanistic

psychology emerged with the aim of the development of self-actualization through self-directed learning (Purswell, 2019; Patterson, 1977).

Although many attempts are made to reform curriculum, train teachers, and develop instructional materials for learner-centered teaching, our teachers are still stuck in their predominant ideal of teacher-centeredness and imposing their supremacy over students (Brinkmann, 2016)However, learners wish to learn and grow their knowledge, skills, and attitudes differently in a free, fearless, joyful, and respectful environment (Rogers, 1980). In this context, one of the options may be humanistic education, which requires further explanation. The purpose of the study is to discuss different aspects of humanistic education in light of students' learning for their personal growth.

As its components, this study includes four major sections; Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion, and lastly Reference. The introduction section deals with the broad idea of humanistic education and its needs along with the problem, method, and structure of the study. The discussion section deals with the concept of humanistic education, assumptions of humanistic education, objectives of Humanistic education, curriculum and pedagogy, and humanistic education in the Nepalese context, under different subheadings. The conclusion section presents concisely the major findings from the research's point of view and their brief implication.

From the study, I found that humanistic education respects human values, creates a respectful, non-threatening, and inspiring environment uses non-directive (Self-directed) approaches equips the learners with basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes along with those of their field of interest, provides learners with the opportunity for self-actualization, and lead them toward proper intellectual growth. I expect this study to be useful for curriculum designers, policymakers, and teachers to use humanistic education for the personal growth of learners.

Methodology of the Study

The study is based on the study of previous works and literature. To accomplish the study, I studied different books, research articles published in journals, theses/dissertations, and reports related to humanism and humanistic education and used them as pieces of evidence to support my argument and deduce the conclusion.

Discussion

The History of Humanistic Education

The concept of humanistic education emerged from the ideas of sophists of ancient Greece and was associated with Protagoras' concept 'man is the measure of all things'. They raised questions on human nature, value, the essence of human life, and the proper way of life for the livelihood of Man as Man (Aloni, 2007). Humanistic education is not an isolated idea; it is interwoven with the conceptions of multiple schools of philosophical thought. It takes its conceptions of human perfection from culturalism, the authenticity of self-actualization from naturalism and romanticism, the authenticity of self-creation from existentialism, human empowerment and emancipation from criticalism and radicalism, knowledge building from progressivism, subjective thinking from post-modernism (pp. 12-54). Further, Mauch & Park, (2003) claimed that Rogers and Maslow's ideas accelerated the humanistic principles in education. For Rogers, learning takes place with self–direction in a non-threatening environment, and for Maslow, it takes place with self-motivation when basic needs are fulfilled (McGrath & Coles, 2016). For this reason, they also put human nature at the centre considering every individual first as a human being and then only as a learner.

Lei (2007) as cited in Khatib et al., (2013, p. 45) urged "Humanistic approach emphasizes the importance of the inner world of the learner and places the individual's thought, feelings, and emotions at the forefront of all human development". Thus, humanistic education stresses the personal worth of the individual, the centrality of human values, and the creative, active nature of human beings. In light of this argument, Carl Rogers' non-directive teaching model directs pupils to provide reasonable conditions of self-direction so that they go for their growth as per their potential (Patterson, 1977). This model was brought forth by criticizing the traditional education system, which overlooked the physical or psychological embarrassment of disruptive students. In contrast, humanistic education is committed to a social and intellectual climate to protect them from intellectual oppression, physical punishment, and humiliation (Aloni, 2007). The essence of humanistic education is that it keeps the value of human dignity over any other social value. The above thoughts univocally advocate for educating individuals in a free, fearless, inspiring, and respectful environment where learners learn self-directed with full inspiration.

Assumptions and Principles of Humanistic Education

Different from other animals, perfect humanness begins with the development of the whole child. Holistic development is possible through personalized, and

experiential education giving attention to interpersonal communication and social behaviours that develop self-actualization (Aloni, 2007; Barrow & Woods, 2006). In its adherence, Firdaus & Mariyat, (2017) claim that "The concept of the humanistic approach in education according to Freire is a process of liberation from the oppressive system and raised awareness of the critical processes centered on educators and learners as subjects in the process of teaching and learning"(p. 25). Freire, (2005) further affirms that education subjectifies humans and helps them to integrate rather than adopt; if they are treated from a humanistic perspective. Psychologists assume that humanistic approaches describe human behaviour and are motivated by an inherent drive that directs us to acquire our unique potential to an ideal level of self-actualization (Bernstein, 2011). John Dewey's progressive education and humanistic theory are univocal about self-actualization through education but progressivists criticize humanists for ignoring personal development with a broader social perspective (Deway, 2001; Bell & Schniedewind, 1989). Along with the social perspective, the characteristics of a graduate humanistic education are described from different points of view:

… [f]rom the intellectual perspective, he or she will be endowed with curiosity and intellectual flexibility, open-mindedness and broad horizons, skills of distinction and reasoning, and rational, autonomous, critical, interpretive and creative thinking. From the social perspective, it is important that he or she be characterized by the love of his/her fellow men and women, courtesy, honesty and decency, a sense of justice and sensitivity to the needs of the other, as well as involved caring and responsible solidarity in the community and society. From the intra-personal point of view, we must strive towards a graduate who excels in the sincere, sensitive and demanding caring for the nature and identity of his or her personality as it is manifested both in his relationship with others and with himself (Aloni, 2007, p. 78).

The above assumptions indicate the need of some guiding principles for the formulation of goals and objectives of an effective humanistic curriculum. Correspondingly, Gage & Berliner, (1991).outlined some basic principles for a humanistic approach as: a) students learn best what they want to know; b) knowing how to learn is more important than acquiring a lot of knowledge; c) self-evaluation is only the meaningful evaluation of a student's work; d) feelings are as important as facts; and e) students learn best in a non-threatening environment (Gage & Berliner, 1991). These guiding principles were observed to be inferential for developing optimism, goal-setting, goal-orientation, self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-confidence, self-motivation, self-actualization, and self-esteem with increased achievement (Huitt, 1999).

Educational Objectives in Humanistic Education

Considering the above-mentioned principles and perspectives of humanistic education, standing in line with Maslow and Roger Gage & Berliner, (1991) proposed the goal of education to be to promote the growth of students' desire to learn and teach them how to learn. To achieve this broad goal, they further suggested the objectives of humanistic education as a) to stimulate positive self-directedness and independence; b) to enable the students to be responsible for their learning; c) to develop creativity through divergent thinking; d) to promote thirst of knowledge and exploratory behaviuor, and e) to fortify an interest in the arts. These objectives are focused primarily on the acquisition of self-actualization; and correspondingly subjected to the development of the self-regulatory system, feeling systems, diverse thinking for understanding, investigative behaviour, and the emotion system (Huitt, 2009).

Humanistic Curriculum and Pedagogy

The curriculum is one of the four ways of education (a balanced combination between approaches and goals, a balanced combination between Orientation and Information, educational climate, and the curriculum) which Aloni, (2007) proposed. She proclaims that a curriculum is as one of the specific means for developing learners' self-actualization, promoting a well-educated democratic society, and enabling students to active participation in preserving national and human culture. To infuse the attributes, it recommends an integrated curriculum with compulsory courses at the school level that are needed for developing all human behaviours discussed above. However, it can be developed in different organizations. The humanists suggest adhering to the principle of generality including the most necessary human behaviours (compulsory courses) and the principle of choice comprising the subjects of personal choice (elective courses) within the given boundary. For this reason, a humanist curriculum respects the pupil's choice as well as provides both essential knowledge and skills for living as a human being. In this regard, Rogers, (1980)states that the humanistic curriculum is founded on the humanistic ideal of self-actualization. It accentuates the role of the learner and also the place of social, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual development. Activities often begin with or incorporate effective understandings. The learner's personal, imaginative and emotional responses are included as a part of the method and also the aim of learning, allowing them to develop self-understanding (through self-discovery) additionally as intellectual knowledge and skills. Some humanistic approaches also include spiritual and/or mystical processes and practices, like meditation and transpersonal techniques, as a part of the instructional programme. For that reason, Aloni, (2007) stresses thematic instruction, cooperative and collaborative work, with the caring role of the teacher.

The main aim of education ought to be to provide proficient, compassionate, affectionate, and affable people. Learner's interests and aspirations are an important determinant of the curriculum structure and content and hence influence learning effectiveness (Shiundu, S. J., & Omulando, 1992). Humanistic learning theories emphasize the individual and his/her development through reason and encounters with the knowledge of human culture (Huitt, 2009). As a rule, humanistic learning theorists describe educator–learner relationships in three conditions congruence, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. For this, it requires a sensitive understanding of a person's internal frame of reference, prioritizing personal growth rather than the transmission of content (Purswell, 2019). So humanistic teachers highlight the personal and social dimensions of learners (Ornstein, A. C., Behar-Horenstein, L. S., and Pajak, 2003). The teacher takes on the role of resource, facilitator, and creator of a fear-free learning climate. Activities often begin with or incorporate affective understandings.

History of Humanistic Education in Nepal

People could hardly feel the sense of humanistic education in Nepal during the Rana regime before 1951. As it was considered to be dark age of education(Wood, 1965; Report of the National Education Commission, 2049, 1992).Because there were no provisions for individual rights for education and nominal provisions for educating common citizens. People were dehumanized, objectified, and adopted as described by Freire, (2005). Although the National Education System Plan (NESP) 2071 attempted to include child-centeredness' in instruction and focused individual development through vocational education and extra-curricular activities (*National Education System Plan, 1971-1976*, 1971); the students were compelled to follow the tyranny of kingship and party-less panchayat system and they were deprived of the right to speech and publication (Bhattarai, 2007). Nevertheless, students experienced humanistic education. There was no question about self-actualization. Despite the reflection of humanistic value in some aspects of the curriculum teacher's supremacy in practice was abundant.

Along with the change in the political systems, various reforms were made in the Nepalese school curriculum in 1992, 1998, 2006, 2014, and recently in 2019 which attempted to address the needs of contemporary society and the pupil. But still, "… [the] current school curriculum development process takes place at the top where curriculum experts play a decisive role" (Rimal, 2018, p. 66). These experts expect the teacher's involvement during the revision phase only. In this process, students remain aside. This is not enough to serve to address the humanistic perspective in education. However, the National Curriculum

Framework (NCF) 2006 and NCF 2019 have included integrated courses, student-centered activities, core and elective subjects to serve common and specific needs, life skill education, moral education, and inclusiveness in the education of all levels (*National Curriculum Framework for Scool Education in Nepal 2006*, 2006; *National curriculum framework for School Education 2019*, 2019). These attempts can be expected to inspire the teachers to create a nonthreatening environment and motivate learners towards self-directed learning, although the teachers still have the hang of the banking model of education.

Conclusion and Implication

Above all, humanistic education claims all education processes including its formulation of policies, development of curriculum, and school and classroom practices should be oriented towards cognitive and affective growth of learners respecting all human values and learner's interests. For this purpose, the most important aspects that education should focus on are to develop the motive of self-directedness and lead the students towards self-actualization. So then, it needs a value-based multi-disciplinary integrated curriculum; learner-centered, self-directed learning strategies, fearless and motivating learning climate, and empathetic and ready to be changed, teachers.

I expect this paper could be useful to both the curriculum developers including the policymakers and the teachers to be oriented towards rendering appropriate policy, plan, content, resources, and methods and act accordingly for learners' personal development in a humanistic manner.

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