Tạp chí Lý Luận Chính Trị Và Truyên Thông

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Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), was a famous philosopher and educator during the French Enlightenment. He not only studied about inequality, the role of science and art, and the social contract but also about education. Through the work "Emile, or On Education," completed in May 1762, in which he related a story of teaching Emile with a tutor. He introduced new educational ideas which contrasted to the contemporary feudal and ecclesiastical education. His main ideas about education through "Emile, or On Education," are expressed as follows.

First – regarding the goal of education. Unlike many other contemporary philosophers whose educational goal was to produce gallant, elegant, polite, talented people, as well as capable businessmen in the marketplace, Jean Jacques Rousseau in "Emile, or On Education" aimed to train good citizens, reliable men of the family and good workers. From an individual's innate human goodness, a person is easily corrupted and degenerated when entering society. Thus he needs education. Through education, an individual knows how to live in society, how to avoid bad things, how to live with others, and how to keep his innate human goodness. Rousseau wrote that living was the profession that he wanted to teach, and "our genuine learning is the study of being human"(1). In the contemporary society where he lived, it was full of injustice, contradictions, difficulties and unexpected things. Therefore, he believed education should aim to teach the individual to adapt to such a society and teach a student how to preserve himself in the harsh conditions of nature. This means, the individual "knows how to live," knows what to do and adjust his own needs. In other words, the purpose of education is "to teach and learn to be human," so that the individual can live and adapt to the harsh circumstances of nature and society.

Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote that it was not enough for people to preserve their own children. He cited that it was necessary to teach children self-preservation for when they're grown up, to teach them to endure the blows of fate, and not to fear wealth or poverty, but teach them to live on the ice of Iceland or on the hot rocks of Malta if needed(2). Rousseau's thought on the purpose of education was extremely progressive by citing that the purpose of learning was not to become a mandarin, or to have position, status or a fortune. Starting from the point that human beings are inherently equal in nature, education must aim at teaching how to be human. In "Emile, or On Education," he wrote that he never distinguished between positions, levels, or properties, because man was the same in every position. The rich did not have a bigger stomach nor better digestion than the poor. The master did not have a longer, stronger arm than his slave, nor was a rich man more noble than a common man. He argued since the natural needs were the same everywhere, the means to supply them must be the same everywhere. Therefore, he suggested that human education should be suitable to becoming human, not to anything else. He pointed out that trying to train an individual for a specific position was rendering him useless to any other position(3).

Second – comprehensive education of physicality, mentality and morality. According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, in order to live and adapt to the harsh conditions of weather, climate and people, the individual first of all needs to be physically trained and of course, needs knowledge to overcome difficulties, tough, arduous challenges, and needs morality to overcome the temptations of need. Because Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that what makes people basically good is because they have few needs, and rarely compare themselves with others. On the other hand, what makes people basically evil is that they have so many needs and concerns about public opinion(4). Regarding comprehensive physical, mental and moral training, Rousseau described the physical education of Emile as follows. "The young man has been rigorously trained; he was unafraid of the harsh weather of the seasons, has engaged in the heaviest labors, has surrendered his soul to the rules, where there was no place for prejudice and indulgence. He only falls in true love with righteousness and needs nothing but himself"(5). Physical education helped people to have strong health. "The body must have the strength to obey the soul: a good servant must be strong"(6), he

explained.

According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, it is necessary to have a comprehensive education in terms of physical, mental and moral aspects so that people have courage and determination to strive for virtue. He said, "There is no happiness without courage, no virtue without striving. Virtue is created from strength while strength is the foundation of all virtues. Virtue belongs only to beings weak in nature but strong in will; that is the only thing that makes a righteous human value"(7). From this fact he points out that "almost all examples of the longest life are drawn from those who exercised (physically – the authors emphasizes) the most, who endured the most hardship and labor"(8).

On the basis of a strong physical body, Jean Jacques Rousseau aimed at educating children with basic knowledge about nature such as physics and astronomy, as well as knowledge about society, humanity, historical figures, private property rights, economic systems, and monetary, state, and civil duties. However, when educating children with knowledge, it is necessary to be selective because there is some knowledge beyond children's ability. Some knowledge is useless, unnecessary for life, even false. Within the limits of their ability, people in general and children in particular only need "a handful of knowledge that really contributes to our well- being that is worthy of our obvious searches, and of a child that we want him to be. The point is not to know what exists, but to know only what is useful"(9).

Regarding moral education, Jean Jacques Rousseau paid great attention to teaching children sympathy, empathy, sharing, and sincere kindness from their hearts. The purpose of his moral education for children is to teach them to know that, "If he discovers a discord among his friends, he tries to reconcile them. If he sees people suffering, he will come to see into the cause of their suffering"(10). At the same time, he also taught children to appreciate and cherish the values and achievements of other people's labor, so that they could choose a simple and appropriate way of life, and to appreciate and love labor from an early age. In "Emile, or On Education," he wrote that when standing before a great feast, the child must see "that all parts of the world have had to bear the burden, twenty million hands may have spent long hours working, thousands may have lost their lives, and all to solemnly present to him at

noon what he would put away in the evening?"(11) Of course, moral education, according to him, must educate children with love for their homeland and the country, must know how to sacrifice their own interests for the common good when needed, etc.(12) Particularly he paid attention to educating the love of labor. Labor not only makes people physically healthy but is also a necessary human obligation. The person who works is the one who has morality. Those who do not work are immoral. In "Emile, or On Education," he wrote "So labor is a necessary obligation for social people. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, any citizen who is lazy and idle is a dishonest person"(13).

Third – an active educational method. It can be said that Jean Jacques Rousseau was a pioneer in the fight against the one-way educational method imposed on children. As he said, if children have to learn reluctantly and passively, they will not be interested in learning. Then education will not be effective. Therefore, he suggested that education should make children curious and interested in learning. From curiosity and interest in discovering new things, children actively learn. The teacher only plays the role of stimulating children's curiosity, orienting and helping them, but not imposing on them. He wrote, "Make your students interested in the phenomena of nature, then you will arouse their curiosity; however, to nurture that curiosity, you should never satisfy it. Set the issue within the competence of the child so that he can solve the issue on his own. Let him understand that he knows something not because he was told to do so, but because he did it by himself; he did not learn science, but he discovered science"(14). Obviously, this is a great educational method that helped children change the educational process into self-education and self-discovery of knowledge. In this active education, Jean Jacques Rousseau was very interested in experiential education or education through practical experience. It is through practical experience that children will not be bored and can see and approach knowledge intuitively. As he explained: "Do not teach your students any kind of lesson with words; they only learn from experience"(15).

This active education method was also recommended by Jean Jacques Rousseau for the adolescent age. Right in the foreword of the work "Emile, or On Education," he criticized contemporary educational methods that made children lose their childhood time and made teachers "always look for the adult inside the children without realizing

the fact that the children are adults"(16). Therefore, in active education, teachers need to provide learners with learning methods according to their own interests and passions. Because "only passion makes us act; And how can we be infatuated with benefits we don't have?"(17) Of course, active education without imposing is not disorganized and undisciplined but always under the direction, guidance and supervision of the teacher. Therefore, the active educational method without imposing always promotes effectiveness in education.

From some of the core contents of Jean Jacques Rousseau's thought on education through his work "Emile, or On Education," there are very interesting implications for Vietnamese education today.

First, from the "purpose of teaching and learning" how to be human as proposed by Jean Jacques Rousseau, we discover a lesson that the noble mission of education in Vietnam and in many other countries must be teaching how to be human, how to live in accordance with the laws of nature and the laws of society. For example, in the context of rapid and severe climate change, if people do not know how to live in harmony with the laws of nature, no matter how well educated they are, they will pay incalculable prices. Besides, in the light of integration, opening-up the country and creating a market economy with many contradicting effects, we must deal with social issues such as the rich-poor gap; social injustice, etc. We also must know how to look directly at the fact, then react to the best of our ability with our own knowledge, labor and efforts. In such social contexts, we must know how to live humanely, with sympathy, sharing, affection and support for each other. These are the purposes of true education. And those values remain significant.

On studying Jean Jacques Rousseau's thought on the purpose of education, we are more and more imbued with the teachings of President Hồ Chí Minh: "Learn to work, to be a person, to be a cadre. Learn to serve the organization, the class and the people, the Fatherland and humankind"(18). With such an importance of education, the 12th Party's Congress continued to affirm: "Education is the leading national policy. Develop education and training to improve people's intellectual level, human

resources and fostering of talents"(19).

Second, from Jean Jacques Rousseau's content of "comprehensive education" which includes physical, mental and moral education, we draw a lesson that we need to persist in a comprehensive educational perspective. Humans first need to develop comprehensively physically, psychologically and physiologically. Without physical health, there is no base for acquiring knowledge. Without morality, it is impossible to promote physical strength as well as the power of knowledge. Therefore, physical education must be combined with intellectual and moral education. At the same time, it is necessary to nurture and educate the aesthetic life, to nurture the perception of beauty associated with truth and good. However, comprehensive education does not mean that education is general and unfocused. It must focus on developing the capacity and qualities of learners. This view on comprehensive education is clarified at the 12th Party's Congress: "Strongly shift the educational process mainly from equipping knowledge to comprehensive development of the capacity and quality of learners; learning goes hand in hand with practice, theory with practice"(20).

Third, from the "active education method," we see that the educational method must be suitable to the goals, level and age of learners. Our educational goal is to create a generation of people who know how to work, live, and behave kindly with people, the community and society; to love labor, the homeland and the Fatherland. With that educational goal, it will be impossible to build educational content which is distant from labor and the reality of socio-political life. Moreover, with educational goals and contents which are associated with work and teaching how to be human, to be a cadre and a servant of the people, we cannot use the imposing educational method which spoils the activity and creativeness of learners. The imposing method is only suitable for cramming knowledge, not for finding the truth, exploring and discovering knowledge by learners themselves. Scientific knowledge is boundless, thus, it is impossible for learners to get all of it by cramming. Instead of that, let them develop their own passion and love for knowledge and science. Then, they will transform the educational process into the process of self-education, i.e. lifelong education and learning. Therefore, education's methods, goals and content will always be consistent with each other. The implementation of educational content will contribute to forming

educational goals. And to this end an active education method is needed.

Fourth, from Jean Jacques Rousseau's view of "taking the learner as the center in the active educational method," we learn the lesson that Vietnamese education should instill the viewpoint that "both teachers and learners are the center of education." The concept of "student-centered" is reasonable and suitable for some countries' conditions, but for Vietnam, it should consider both teachers and students as the core of education. C. Marx once said, "the educator himself needs to be educated" (21), thus, in the process of teaching, the teacher must also teach himself. Moreover, in an "education play" with many roles involved, the teacher and the learner should have the main roles. The teacher should be an exemplary role with deep professional qualification, active pedagogy and good morality. In other words, he should be an example of morality, wisdom, health, and beauty so that he can teach learners how to live in harmony with the laws of nature and the social environment, how to be a good person and how to work hard. Learners are at the center in the sense that they are the recipients of the teacher's comprehensive attention, the ones who receive the teaching service. The purpose and content of education must be instilled in learners, transforming into the qualities of learners. That is how the education purpose can best be achieved. Therefore, a student- centered viewpoint should not be seen as an absolute concept but should take into consideration that "both teachers and learners are the center of education".

Although Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote "Emile, or On Education" more than 258 years ago, even in the context of the feudalism of France, its value and significance on education in general are immense in our educational system. In my opinion, the fundamental thought of Rousseau on education through his work "Emile, or On Education" has many reasonable points which have been presented above. Perhaps what emerged like a red thread in his work was the humanitarian, humanistic, and enlightening spirit of educational ideas. Therefore, as time goes by and through reality changes, the humanity and enlightenment of the educational ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau remain preserved./.

Tài liệu tham khảo

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