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Learning by Conscience As a New Paradigm in Education

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The fact that many learning paradigms that exist today are mostly founded on traditional cognitive methods in the form of reflective thinking, I felt invited to find other alternative paradigms as new ways to attack unexplored areas of learning. One way that could lead to the construction of a new paradigm for learning is to consider reflective attitudes as a way to arrive at equally strong or even more effective methods by which affective aspects of learning could be accommodated. Thus, this paper attempts to propose - learning by conscience- as a new paradigm in education. The proposed paradigm is founded on reflective attitudes which are predicted to positively affect learning and learners. The paradigm is based on the hermeneutic approach and is derived from various means of investigation such as descriptive, analytic, and eclectic methods. The investigation reveals that open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility are the three main components that could form a solid base for the proposed new paradigm of thinking and learning. The investigation also reveals that learning by conscience is projected to occur through impulse, experience, communication, and action.

Keywords: Learning by Conscience, New Paradigm.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two types of reflective framework often used in education, reflective thinking and reflective attitudes. Reflective thinking revolves around the thinking about a certain subject, content, or problem where a thinker analyzes, estimates, and reconstructs such a thought in the best way possible. In other words, reflective thinking is known as one of scientific methods in progressive education which employ five processes of problem solving. These include identifying and finding problems, collecting information, formulating hypotheses, testing these hypotheses, and lastly, evaluating and constructing policies.¹

Furthermore, reflective thinking requires effective communication and ability to solve problems and commitment to solve close-mindedness. Thus, ideas and discussions on reflective thinking cannot ignore the following five components: practicality, reflectiveness, reasonability/logicality, beliefs, and actual actions. Based on the reflective thinking framework, several models of learning have been proposed, such as cooperative learning, learning by doing, collaborative learning, competitive learning, group-investigative learning approach, etc.²

In such a case, reflective thinking stresses more on the kind of thinking that is cognitive and intellectual in nature. However, reflective attitudes, which are the focus

of this paper, tend to lead more to affective aspects. In other words, while reflective thinking emphasizes more on cognitive processes which interact with external aspects, reflective attitudes prioritize internal aspects such as attitudes that can affect learning and learners internally. It is based on this distinction that the proposed "learning by conscience in education" paradigm was developed. Therefore, based on such a perspective about learning, the focus of this paper is to discuss this new paradigm.

In short, this paper argues that reflective attitudes in a way are as important as reflective thinking because they will also lead learners to affective learning. Although cognitive learning is also necessary to educational processes, its indicators are more observable while the indicators of success for this new paradigm will not be easily seen in a short period of time due to other personal determining factors. It is predicted that the indicators for affective learning are predicted to be more difficult to see due time frame requirement. This paper thus argues that learning by conscience should be classified as a new paradigm based on the way it projects the process of the internalization of learning in education.

2. THE MEANING OF LEARNING BY CONSCIENCE

Since the name of a paradigm usually embeds certain meanings, the learning by conscience paradigm in the

content of this paper also consists of three main components: learning, by, and conscience (inner voice/awareness). Together they refer to a learning paradigm which invites learners to rely on conscience in fulfilling their desire for learning. In other words, the paradigm emphasizes the fact that desire for learning should begin from learners' own awareness and conscience which relate to their moral values. Such an awareness is often reflected in one's attitudes and behavior. The paradigm can be also said to consist of a set of moral values which come from external environments, be they from parents or from the society in general, which are then integrated into oneself. This process occurs in conjunction with the development of a learner's personality as permitted by his or her ability. Central to this process is the affective aspect of learners' development which targets the development of their attitudes, behavior, awareness, and moral values.

3. LEARNING BY CONSCIENCE IN THEORY

Although Aronfreed (1968) indicates that the meaning of conscience also refers to both cognitive and affective processes, the learning by conscience paradigm proposed in this paper is based on the kind of conscience that originates only from reflective attitudes, not reflective thinking. The paradigm, thus, requires that the focus of learning be on affective factors only leaving cognitive factors, which relate to thinking processes, outside the scope of this paper.³

Furthermore, John Dewey (in Kohlberg, 1995) refers to conscience as an internalization process or awareness, which occurs in an individual related to his or her moral values. Such an internalization process or awareness can be seen as appropriate or not only when it is reflected in someone's attitudes. This process also relates closely to an individual's or a learner's character. According to Dewey (1962), change in attitudes and moral values can occur in three phases: pre-moral, conventional, and autonomy.⁴ *Pre-moral* refers to a set of behavior motivated by internal social and biological impulses and their consequences. At this phase, learners are still not aware of the fact that they are being constrained by rules. *Conventional* describes the situation where learners are characterized by their submission to power. At this phase, learners accept the values with some level of criticality that are assessed according to the criteria of their group. *Autonomous* is an attitude which is guided by learners' own thinking which enables them to judge whether an objective is appropriate or not. They are also critical in accepting the standard values of their group. In other words, the action of learners is based on their own judgments.⁵

Vygostky also maintains that the learning process for an individual begins during infancy due to passive needs which then develop further into real desires due to being motivated by other factors through the process of internalization. Eventually, this learner would internalize values, behavior and attitudes from his or her parents, from those with authority, or from the social environment in which he or she is raised. Thus, at the initial stage, the process of a careful interpretation of an acquired theory occurs in a learner, which leads him or her to the second

stage where he or she would control behavior and attitudes in a more rational way though still being influenced by external factors.⁶ In turn this then leads to the third stage, where a learner would now be able to control his or her own behavior and attitudes after experiencing an internalization process.⁷

Kelman (2006) also divides the learning of moral values into three stages: compliance, identification, and internalization.⁸ The first stage describes the state where learners would be submissive to expectations and tendencies without the feeling of being responsible on their part. At the second stage, the learners become more responsive and act according to certain desired attitudes and behavior and become satisfied with the values they receives, responded to, and enacted in themselves. During the third stage, a learner is taken to have internalized certain values, attitudes, behavior, needs, and desires.⁹

4. HOW LEARNING BY CONSCIENCE IN OUR CONTEXT WORKS

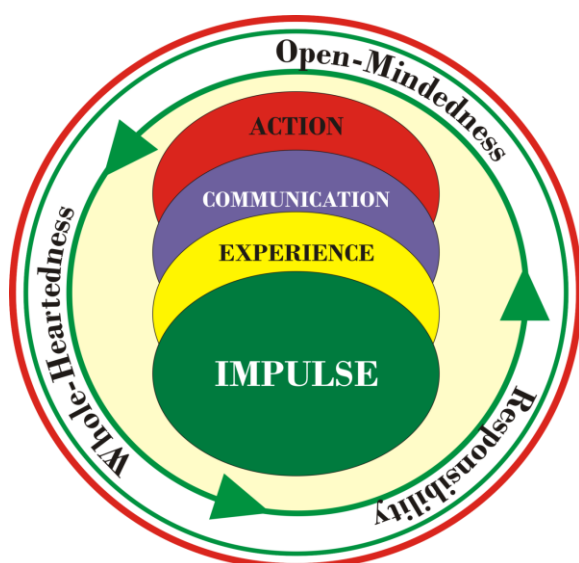
Unlike the various interpretations for reflective attitudes explained above, the paradigm of learning proposed in this paper considers reflective attitudes that correspond to three components: open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility.¹⁰ Most of the processes that occur during the formation of reflective attitudes can be classified into either one of these three components. The *open-mindedness* component has three aspects: (1) a free choice for learners to do unbiased things, bias nature, and away from thoughts that are closedminded and rigid; (2) a desire on the part of learners to explore the perspectives or opinions that are different from their own; and (3) open to other alternatives, which means that a learner does not perceive that he or she is the most correct one, more than his or her other colleagues. For the *whole-heartedness* component, there are two aspects to consider: (1) in resolving issues or problems faced by learners, these issues or problems should be solved effectively; (2) learners must strive to turn difficult problems into easier problems so that learning does not become intimidating to them. Lastly, for the responsibility component, there are three aspects to consider: (1) full support to the desires or interests that appear in learners; (2) possessing a sense of responsibility in their attitude towards what has been done; and (3) learners must have personal integrity as a sense of responsibility for what they have been owned by internalization.

All of these stages and components for attitudes cannot in themselves point to a new paradigm without being subject to another stage or process that is known to be an integral part of learning by conscience itself. This process involves the following components: *Impulse* (encouragement from inside), *Experience*, *Communication*, and *Action*.¹¹

Impulse refers to a situation where there is a drive from within a learner toward a certain object through special circumstances in the surrounding so as to have some kind of a passion for the object. *Experience* is the stage where the learner has experienced and realized that the object is already within oneself. The experience is there because of a

feeling towards an object, the learners' thinking about the object, and finally their contemplation of the results or consequences which arose from the object. *Communication* refers to what is already being felt and thought about and what the consequences are. These then are communicated through dialogue either through individual reflection or with external parties with full consideration given to an object, whether or not the object is acceptable or appropriate for the desire. At this stage, the value of internalization has occurred and has been personalized. Lastly, *action* refers to the process of performing an attitude to act in accordance with what has been considered. Action has certain criteria, which are manifested in learners to achieve an objective. This objective corresponds closely to attitudes, values and behaviors possessed. At this stage, the personalized value has become a way of life and criteria for conducting something serious, open and accountable academically and socially.

Thus, reflective attitude is a stage of an action that begins with open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. Once learners have a positive attitude towards what will be learned in their learning process, the attitude will emerge from within themselves as a desire to do something more positive, through what they found and experienced, and communicated, either to themselves or to their friends, teachers, parents and even society in general. Subsequently, the desire or some motivation that already exists within themselves through their exposure to positive experience and through good communication either internally or externally will be transformed into action. As a result, the process will materialize into real learning in accordance with applicable rules and one that is based on more independent, unbiased, and fair thoughts and away from coercion or another person's influence such as teachers, community, or parents. Based on this paradigm, these series of actions would truly materialize into a way of life. Refer to the following figure for the details of the process.



Groove Thinking of "Learning by Conscience"

The above figure shows that the process of learning by conscience consists of several stages which include impulse, experience, communication, and action. At the *impulse* stage,

the learner is taken to have already acquired an impression about a certain object. This stage is further divided into three stages: (1) *Specific situation*, is when learners find specific situations that can generate impulses. (2) *Specific surrounding*, is when learners find something special around them so it generates impulses in them. (3) *Desire*, is when learners have a desire for an object based on a specific situation or environment.

At the *experience* stage, learners are taken to have experienced the object or have interacted with the said object. This stage is also further divided into three stages: (1) *Feeling* is when learners continue to reflect on what has happened and felt in themselves, such as a like or dislike toward something. (2) *Thought* is when learners are guided towards a better understanding or are persuaded to become more reasonable in seeing an object, which has generated a sense of love in them. (3) *Consequence* is when learners are required, based on their feelings and thoughts, to see the active effect, which is caused when something is accepted as an attitude in them.

At the *communication* stage, the learner has become even more active due to the urge to communicate the object actively and openly. This stage also has three stages: (1) *Dialogue* is when learners have to express actively what they perceived and experienced to others. (2) *Individual reflection* is where learners reflect on something based on their experience and the results of their communications with an external environment. (3) *Interpersonal deliberation* is when learners already have considerations about something, if anything is accepted or rejected. At this point, internalization can be taken as having occurred in learners.

At the last stage, *action*, learners continue to act in accordance with the attitude, which has been well considered. In order to have more concrete actions, this stage is also divided into the following stages: (1) *Criterion* is when learners, based on what has been internalized, already have a standard of judgment and purpose related to attitudes, values, behavior and beliefs. (2) *Manifestation* is when the attitudes, values, behaviors or beliefs that have been held are then converted into clear, real and concrete actions so that learners have their own ways of acting compared to others. (3) *Self-realization* is when learners are no longer clear about their attitudes, values, and behavior but have personalized or adopted these values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs as their way of life to achieve a specific purpose.

It is at this phase where moral values and attitudes have been integrated into real actions that learning by conscience can be said to have occurred. A certain act usually begins with internal drives which make their way to consciousness and then awareness. Such awareness then leads individuals to desires and urges.

Aspects such as attitudes, behavior, moral values, trust, and character all originate from internal desires of an individual. These desires often come to surface in a certain condition, situation or environment which is supportive to certain purposes. Then, an idea to express such desires based on total freedom emerges. However, when this idea needs to be expressed to the external world successfully, it needs to be governed by certain criteria related to experience, attitudes and behavior, moral values, etc. Eventually, these

aspects will unite as one solid entity within this individual. This is the main idea of learning by conscience.

After successfully internalizing or integrating these aspects into a solid line of thinking, an individual is hoped to have possessed their own perspective on values, attitudes, behavior, etc. This means that such an individual is already in the position to develop further until he or she acquires a new format or way to understand these values, attitudes, and behavior either theoretically or in their daily practice. After going through all these four stages learners will be controlled by attitudes related to open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. Without these parameters, the perspective being formed by a learner will not be successfully completed due to its vulnerability to uncertainties in the way they would behave or act.

5. CONCLUSION

In short, based on the above explanation, learning by conscience can be described as a paradigm which is based on reflective attitudes consisting of three important components: open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. As for the process in which learning by conscience occurs, there are another four phases that learners go through: impulse, experience, communication, and action.

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