

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES - FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

**Soha Tarek Nouh**

Eton University, USA

## ABSTRACT

This report embarks on an exploration of the profound role philosophy has played in shaping education across various historical epochs, commencing with an investigation into the history and fundamental purpose of education. Philosophy has consistently served as a cornerstone, propelling the refinement of learning and teaching methods while actively contributing to curriculum development. It delves into the overarching aims and values of education, emphasizing its persistent objective of enhancing the quality of life, encompassing cultural, social, and economic values. Furthermore, this report analyzes the rationale behind implementing effective teaching Pedagogy and Andragogical theory, underscoring their pivotal roles in facilitating meaningful learning and comprehensive development. It also scrutinizes how the methodologies of ancient philosophers continue to influence contemporary educational practices, providing insights into their impact on modern teaching methods and curriculum design. Lastly, the report explores key theories of education and learning, elucidating their practical application in pedagogical contexts.

**Keywords:** *Philosophy of Education, Curriculum Development, Teaching Pedagogy, Ancient Philosophical Methodology, Educational Theories and Learning*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone in the foundation and preservation of human civilization (Boyd, 1947, p.26) [1] Attempting to trace the origins of every civilization may prove an exceedingly intricate task. Therefore, this report sets its initial focus on one of the pivotal civilizations that have significantly shaped the contemporary world – the Greek civilization.

Within the annals of Greek civilization, numerous philosophers embraced the intrinsic value of education, each offering unique perspectives on its significance. These philosophical ideals found resonance in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, where scholars and intellectuals remained profoundly influenced by Greek philosophical thought, integrating its principles into their educational frameworks.

As William Boyd posited in 1947 [1], there have been three notable epochs of educational development in European history. The first of these occurred during the Greek era, marked by profound intellectual exploration and the cultivation of knowledge. The subsequent periods transpired at the close of the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance, and following the French Revolution, each representing distinct epochs of educational reform and evolution.

Before delving into the historical evolution of educational practices, it is imperative to establish a common understanding of the fundamental terms and concepts that underpin the field of education.

### **The Meaning and History of Education**

Education represents a lifelong process, fostering continuous learning, knowledge acquisition, cognitive enhancement, and behavioral transformation. It empowers individuals to actively contribute to the advancement of the collective world and sustainable development. Additionally, education nurtures self-confidence and the ability to articulate thoughts, ultimately enabling individuals to play meaningful roles in their communities, thus creating further opportunities (Ignou, 2017, p.6) [3].

The etymology of the word "education" offers valuable insights. It originates from the Latin words 'e,' meaning 'out of,' and 'duco,' signifying 'I lead.' Consequently, education can be interpreted as the act of leading out or drawing out one's potential (Ignou, 2017) [3].

In a broader context, education encompasses diverse categories, most notably formal and non-formal education. Formal education, often referred to as schooling, constitutes a structured and hierarchical learning system culminating in the attainment of qualifications upon the completion of an academic journey within educational institutions, guided by teachers, principals, and dedicated professionals. In contrast, non-formal education extends learning opportunities to adults who autonomously identify their knowledge needs and access resources accordingly. Furthermore, young learners engage in non-formal education under the supervision of guardians (Barkan, 2010, p.598) [4].

The significance of questioning within the realm of education cannot be underestimated. Questioning serves as a catalyst for critical thinking, fueling curiosity, and promoting problem-solving skills. Nevertheless, the role of questioning has been the subject of ongoing debate, particularly between philosophy, often considered the cornerstone of all scientific disciplines, and educators. Historically, professional philosophers and educators have navigated academic landscapes as relative strangers. Educators sometimes struggle to discern how general philosophers, who may not provide definitive answers akin to the sciences, can shed light on educational matters (Schofield, 1972, p.2) [5].

## Philosophers' Perspectives on Education

The enduring relationship between philosophy and education remains inseparable, evolving through various historical epochs and adopting diverse perspectives and practices. This enduring alliance between philosophy and education has long aimed to empower individuals, inspiring them to engage in critical thinking, make independent choices, and exercise autonomy in decision-making.

The term "philosophy" itself, originating from the Greek word "philosophia," is a testament to this synergy. "Philo" denotes "loving" or "love of," while "Sophia" signifies "wisdom." In essence, philosophy represents the "love of wisdom" (Nicholson, 2022, p.11) [2]. With this profound connection between philosophy and wisdom in mind, we delve into the methodologies employed by various philosophers throughout history and explore how these methodologies have significantly shaped the landscape of education.

Nicholson, D. (2022) *Philosophy of Education in Action*. 2nd ed. Taylor and Francis, p.11 [2], provide valuable insights into the enduring relationship between philosophy and education, offering a deeper understanding of how philosophy, as the "love of wisdom," has influenced the development of educational practices and theories.

### Socratic Thinking (Socrates c.470 BCE - 399 BCE)

Socrates, widely revered as the father of Western philosophy, occupies an iconic position in the annals of philosophical thought. His profound contributions extended beyond mere philosophical discourse, encompassing the realm of education. Central to Socratic philosophy was the conviction that education held immense potential to nurture and refine individuals. He firmly believed that knowledge was a collective inheritance of humanity, and the pursuit of wisdom and virtue should be inseparable, as true wisdom necessitated moral virtue (O'Connor, 2015, p.79) [6].

A succinct yet insightful description of Socratic education, one that refrains from portraying Socrates as a traditional teacher, is offered by Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 1.2.2–3). According to Xenophon, Socrates instilled in his associates a fervent desire for virtue and kindled within them the hope that through self-care and self-improvement, they could attain nobility and moral goodness (O'Connor, 2015, p.79) [6].

Furthermore, Socrates pioneered what can be termed an "oral culture" in his educational approach, centering on the art of dialogue to elucidate fundamental concepts. His pedagogical method revolved around the art of questioning and encouraging his interlocutors to participate actively in the exchange of ideas. This dialectical approach, epitomized in dialogues like the *Euthydemus*, assumed a

pivotal role in Socratic education, offering a valuable platform for intellectual exploration and growth (Scott, 2000, p.44) [7].

Socrates, through his innovative pedagogy rooted in dialogue and inquiry, left an indelible mark on both philosophy and education, shaping the way we engage with knowledge and moral principles to this day.

#### Plato's Influence on Education (428 BCE - 348 BCE)

Plato, renowned for his philosophical endeavors, dedicated much of his life to upholding the legacy of his mentor, Socrates. Socrates, whose life ended tragically with a death sentence for charges of impiety, had profoundly impacted the intellectual development of Athenian youth. Plato, deeply committed to preserving Socrates' teachings, took a monumental step by founding what is often regarded as the earliest European university, the Academy.

The Academy, founded by Plato, holds historical significance as a pioneering institution of higher learning in Greece. Plato's visionary commitment to advancing knowledge and facilitating its dissemination led to this institution, which played a pivotal role in the evolution of European education. Notably, the Academy welcomed female students—a progressive stance in an era marked by limited educational opportunities for women.

Within the precincts of the Academy, a comprehensive curriculum encompassed a wide array of subjects, with a distinct focus on mathematics, astronomy, and geometry. Plato's educational philosophy extended beyond empirical knowledge; he recognized the value of imagination as a pedagogical tool, fostering analytical skills and creative thinking among his students.

One distinctive aspect of Plato's educational approach involved the use of imaginary scenarios, a precursor to contemporary case studies. Plato challenged his students to engage in critical analysis by envisioning intricate situations and evaluating the inherent advantages and disadvantages. This innovative use of imagination enriched the educational experience and laid a foundation for subsequent pedagogical methods.

Plato's enduring contributions to education exemplify his unwavering dedication to the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. His legacy continues to influence educational philosophy and practice, leaving an indelible mark on the evolution of pedagogy (Murphy, 2015, p.10) [8].

#### Ibn Rushd / Averroes (1126 - 1198): A Pioneer in Theoretical and Practical Education

Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes, stands as a prominent figure in the history of education and philosophy. His life and philosophical contributions were

primarily situated in North Africa and Muslim Spain. Ibn Rushd's philosophical underpinnings were deeply rooted in Greek philosophy, and he played a significant role in fostering educational opportunities, notably advocating for the education of women. His philosophy was characterized by a harmonious synthesis of theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Central to Ibn Rushd's educational philosophy is the assertion that scriptural teachings serve a dual purpose. According to him, these teachings provide humanity with not only theoretical knowledge to explore the fundamental truths of existence but also practical knowledge to guide individuals in leading sincere and purposeful lives (Kadi, 2016, p.258) [9].

In the context of our discussion on the evolution of educational thought, Ibn Rushd's emphasis on the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge resonates with the broader historical development of educational philosophies.

This holistic perspective, spanning Greek, Islamic, and European traditions, reflects the timeless endeavor to nurture well-rounded individuals equipped to engage meaningfully with the world and its challenges.

The philosophies of influential thinkers like Socrates, Plato, and Ibn Rushd have left a lasting imprint on modern teaching philosophies and practices. These enduring ideas, rooted in critical thinking, creative teaching, and holistic education, continue to shape

As a direct consequence of the profound influence exerted by philosophers, it becomes imperative to explore the fundamental aims and values that underpin the educational process.

### **The Aim and Values of Education**

In the rapidly evolving global landscape, marked by dynamic changes and emerging challenges, the imperatives of our time necessitate a concerted effort characterized by creativity, courage, and determination. These attributes are indispensable for effectively addressing contemporary challenges and rising to the occasion (Zajda & Daun, 2009, p.22) [10].

As a response to this evolving context, it becomes evident that educational reform initiatives, both on national and international scales, must transcend mere conventional planning and financial resource allocation. The fundamental objective of these reform policies should be the attainment of educational excellence (The Delors Committee Report, p.193) [19].

Education, guided by its foundational principles of equality and empowerment, assumes a multifaceted role in the modern era. It serves as a catalyst for societal equality by dismantling barriers and championing inclusivity,

ensuring equitable access to quality education for all members of society. Concurrently, education empowers individuals by furnishing them with essential skills and knowledge, enabling them to actively engage in their communities and make well-informed decisions. In a world characterized by rapid transformations, education fosters adaptability and resilience, equipping individuals to effectively meet the complex demands of contemporary life.

Furthermore, values education, to be genuinely meaningful and authentic, necessitates a heightened emphasis on community involvement, a pronounced focus on social critique, and a profound, critical comprehension of essential societal values, including democracy, equality, human rights, and justice (Zajda & Daun, 2009, p.22) [10] In educational settings where values education and critical literacy are integrated, it is essential that values are not imposed but rather subjected to open and deliberative discussions. This approach underscores the importance of reasoned discourse and reflection in fostering a morally upright society where ethical principles and virtues are upheld collectively

In summary, education, as a driving force for societal progress, plays a pivotal role in promoting equality, empowerment, adaptability, and resilience in the face of a rapidly changing world. It is incumbent upon educational reform efforts to align with the central goal of achieving educational excellence, recognizing the transformative potential of education in shaping a better future for all (The Delors Committee Report, 193; Zajda & Daun, 2009, p.22) [19], [10].

Within the realm of education's influence on social cohesion, Zebun Nisa Khan (2016) [14] emphasizes the pivotal role of instilling citizenship principles as a means to bridge societal divides among individuals from diverse backgrounds (Khan, 2016, pp. 23-26) [14]. This objective of enhancing social cohesion can manifest practically through classroom and schoolyard activities.

Moreover, education plays a critical role in the economic domain, with significant ramifications for employment and income. In various nations, individuals with higher educational qualifications tend to secure positions of prestige and receive commensurately higher wages compared to their less-educated counterparts. Furthermore, numerous countries have recognized the strategic importance of investing in education, particularly to cater to emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, water resource engineering, and cybersecurity.

As highlighted by Catherine Grant (2017) [12], comprehensive secondary education and universal primary education have the potential to uplift economically disadvantaged countries by providing the requisite human capital to lift substantial portions of the population out of poverty (Grant, 2017, p. 13) [12]. Additionally, tertiary education assumes a pivotal role in propelling economic growth and development, particularly for the younger demographic.

In summary, education's contributions to both social cohesion and economic advancement are undeniable. It serves as a catalyst for fostering unity and bridging societal disparities, while concurrently fueling economic progress by equipping individuals with the competencies and knowledge essential for personal and national prosperity.

Investors often view the education sector as one of the burgeoning industries, primarily due to its recognition as a foundational necessity for societal development. As part of the research for this report, a Zoom interview was conducted with Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim, Vice President of the Future Education Holding Company in the UK, a seasoned expert in the field of education boasting over twenty-five years of experience in management and consultancy.

Dr. Ibrahim's extensive career has spanned diverse educational sectors, including vocational training, further education, and higher education, both in the UK and the MENA region. Drawing from his wealth of experience, Dr. Ibrahim highlighted the immense profitability of the higher education sector. He emphasized its substantial demand, particularly in the Middle East, where there is a fervent drive among Arab nations to advance their countries and compete on a global scale with more developed nations. This insight underscores the significance of higher education as a pivotal driver for societal progress and economic development, aligning with the broader theme of education's multifaceted role in contemporary society.

In the pursuit of understanding the dynamic interplay between education and the evolving challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this study distinctly focuses on the MENA region. The insights presented in this table, derived from an extensive analysis by the author, originate from the perspectives of educators in this region.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
Investments are increasing significantly in the educational sector, especially in higher education.	Education is still not accessible to everyone, especially in remote communities.
Educators became more aware of the importance of regular training and teacher training qualifications.	Many educators are not familiar with educational technology and the mechanisms of remote teaching.
Educational institutions are giving priority to creating learning management systems ( LMS), to cope with the digital age	The curriculums are not encouraging critical thinking
Arab governments have become more flexible in accepting E. learning and approving the certificates obtained for online degrees, for undergraduate and postgraduate programs.	The values of citizenship, democracy, and gender balance are still not included as valuable concepts in curriculums and discussions in classes
Educational institutions ensure that both students and teachers are equipped with computer devices to facilitate the learning process for everyone.	Quality assurance standards are not activated for many educational institutions

**Table 1.** Insights derived through an analysis of responses from educators in the MENA region (Soha Tarek, 2023).[20]

Dr. Bronwen Maxwell, Prof. Toby Greany, Kath Aspinwall, Prof. Graham Handscomb, Sarah Seleznyov, and Prof. Tim Simkins, from the University College London Institute of Education and Sheffield Hallam University (2015, p. 7) [15], emphasize that the process of engaging in inquiry can have a substantial impact on empowering teachers to cultivate a more profound comprehension of both learning and practice. Furthermore, it can lead to transformative shifts in attitudes and practices among educators.

According to a report by UNESCO in 2020, titled "UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response" (UNESCO, 2020, p. 5) [11] the tertiary education sector experienced a negative impact, with a 3.5% decline in enrollments, while pre-primary education also saw a decline of 2.8%. Interestingly, primary and secondary education departments appeared to be less affected by these changes.

In recent years, the higher education sector has embarked on the adoption of innovative theories and approaches aimed at enhancing its capacity to equip



enrolled students with the skills necessary to meet labor market demands. This strategic endeavor not only aims to benefit individual students but also seeks to make significant contributions to community development and foster economic growth.

Examining the pivotal role of education in fostering professional development, stimulating economic growth, and promoting social cohesion underscores the imperative need to enhance the implementation of effective teaching pedagogy and andragogical theories.

Building a robust learning environment represents a multifaceted endeavor that hinges upon the teacher's knowledge and expertise. The teacher's proficiency extends to understanding the current developmental level of their students, possessing a deep grasp of subject content, and wielding the most suitable strategies and structures for scaffolding. The significance of highly skilled teachers in effectively nurturing learning within educational institutions cannot be overstated. This holds true whether the teacher assumes a leadership role in the educational process (Chris Husbands and Jo Pearce, 2012, p. 8)[13]

#### Educational Pedagogies: A Comprehensive Examination of Foundational Theories

Modern learning theories have evolved from the philosophical underpinnings of ancient Greek thinkers, who sought to comprehend the mechanisms of human information acquisition and assimilation. In this section, we will explore three prominent educational theories: Behaviorism pedagogy, Cognitivism, and Humanism, elucidating their applications and ramifications within the realm of education.

**Behaviorism:** This theory revolves around the observation of students' performance and the provision of constructive feedback to enhance their learning behaviors. As articulated by John Wollard (2010, p. 21) [16] Behaviorism finds its empirical basis in meticulous observations conducted within controlled settings, such as laboratories, or specific social contexts like classrooms and workplaces.

**Cognitivism:** Cognitivism, on the other hand, places a primary focus on the acquisition and integration of information to construct a coherent understanding. This theory accentuates the symbolic activities occurring within the cognitive realms of individuals, emphasizing the connection between these cognitive representations and the external world. As elucidated by Christopher Winch and John Gingell (1999, p. 29) [17], Cognitivism underscores the significance of mental processes in learning.

**Humanism:** The Humanist educational theory adopts a student-centered approach, emphasizing the nurturing of students' competencies for personal

growth. It champions the concept of self-actualization, as noted by Paul Bélanger (2011, p. 35-36) [18] , To facilitate effective learning, Humanism employs a diverse range of activities tailored to accommodate various learning styles, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing modalities. Moreover, fostering a strong rapport between educators and learners in the classroom setting fosters open communication, enabling knowledge exchange and mutual inspiration.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, this report has traced the profound impact of philosophical thought on education across various historical periods. It has explored the origins of education, its fundamental objectives, and the pivotal role played by effective teaching pedagogy and andragogical theories in facilitating comprehensive learning and development. The enduring interplay between philosophy and education, exemplified by notable figures like Socrates, Plato, and Ibn Rushd, highlights the inherent connection between wisdom and educational practices.

Education today assumes a multifaceted role in society, serving as a catalyst for promoting equality, empowerment, adaptability, and resilience in the face of a rapidly changing world. Values education, emphasizing principles such as democracy, equality, human rights, and justice, underscores the significance of rational discourse in nurturing an ethically grounded society.

An examination of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the MENA region underscores the global importance of education in fostering social cohesion, economic progress, and equality. Insights from educators in this region underscore the need for equitable access to education and curriculum enhancements that encourage critical thinking and inclusivity.

Furthermore, the report explored prominent learning theories—Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Humanism—revealing diverse approaches to effective learning. These theories guide innovative teaching practices, emphasizing education's adaptive nature to meet the evolving needs of today's learners.

In conclusion, our journey through the intertwined realms of philosophy and education highlights the enduring impact of philosophical thought on the ever-evolving field of education. Our exploration into the interconnectedness of philosophy and education, with a focal point on ancient Greek philosophies and their enduring influence, illuminates the transformative power of education within society. Just as ancient philosophers guided their students toward wisdom and virtue, contemporary education propels individuals toward critical thinking, autonomy, and meaningful societal engagement. This timeless continuum of wisdom's pursuit reaffirms education's role as a beacon of empowerment, bridging the gap between the ancient past and the technological future, all in service of enhancing lives and communities.

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