Critical pedagogy, rituals of distinction, and true professionalism

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INTRODUCTION
Education, as defined in the burgeoning literature since the 1940s, is supposed to be the path to the self actualization of learners. The job of education systems is to find each learner's main talent, and to provide the scaffolding the learner needs to nurture that talent into full blossom—defined as 'self-actualization' by Maslow (1943, 1968). Nevertheless, there are education systems in the world which do not seem to be working properly. The learners who are educated in such systems fail to develop into the stage of self-actualization which, according to Maslow (1943) and Berger (1994), is the ultimate goal of education. Based on insights from data, the current study will argued that, in countries where ideocratic/ideological regimes have control over curriculum content, they ‘intentionally’ move education systems into the direction which guarantees that learners will become obedient to the ruling power; it is further argued that, such educational practices deprive learners of true professionalism. The authors argue that, ideologically-aspired pedagogy—be it religious or otherwise—is doomed to create generations of underdeveloped citizens. The paper will specifically review relevant literature from the fields of education and educational psychology to generate its central hypothesis: that Feuerstein's (1990) individual-oriented notion of 'culturally deprived' learners can be extended to a whole society or a huge portion of it if 'culture' is redefined in terms of 'small-c culture' and 'capital-c Culture'.

The Need for the Study
As it was implied in the introduction, education systems in some countries (e.g., Japan, US, etc.) produce excellent results and professional graduates while they fail in certain other countries (e.g., North Korea, Zimbabwe, Somalia, etc.). A short-sighted explanation of why such a discrepancy exists would be to put all the blame on the
learners and their capabilities. However, success in education is not a uni-variable issue. It requires only common sense to realize that, the success of any educational system is tied to a good number of variables one of which is the learner and his/her capabilities. Needless to say, concrete variables (e.g., infrastructures, buildings, technologies, textbooks, etc.) as well as abstract variables (e.g., educational ideologies, social and political perspectives, theocratic aspirations of political systems, etc.) work in tandem to decide whether an educational system will thrive and reach full blossom, or simply fossilize some way short of success. On this ground, the current study is important in that it sheds light on the kept-in-the-dark side of educations systems in under-developed countries; it describes how political ruling systems intentionally deprive learners of the opportunities they need for self-actualization.

Literature Review

For the purposes of this paper, a brief review of some classic concepts in education is vital. Among other things, the current research will specifically build on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, and Feuerstein’s notion of ‘culturally-deprived’ learners. These will then be merged to synthesize the main argument of the paper.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Although Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is in essence a theory of psychological health, it can be brought to bear on theories of educational development in that it implies that the hierarchical fulfillment of innate human needs in order of priority will eventually culminate in self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In other words, the basic premise of Maslow’s theory is that, when individuals consecutively ascend the different levels within the hierarchy of needs and fulfill them one after the other, they may eventually achieve self-actualization and augment and explode their full potentials.

The most basic level in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs includes physiological needs (i.e., food, water, sleep and sex). The next level includes safety needs (i.e., security, order, and stability). These two levels are important for the physiological survival of human beings (as well as other species), and people will not attempt to accomplish more and develop further unless these needs are fulfilled. Love and belonging comprise the third level of the hierarchy which is dependent on levels one and two. People will not share themselves with others unless they have already satisfied their basic survival needs. Once first, second and third level needs are satisfied, people will attempt to achieve ‘esteem’ which comprises level four; they will realize that, they need to be competent and recognized. When taken together, levels one through four are called D-needs (or ‘deficit’ needs) in that any feeling of shortage in any of them gives people the feeling that they have to get them.

If they are satisfied, people will move to level five, or the cognitive level, where they feel the intellectual motivation to explore; needless to say, exploration is the gate to professionalism. If that is fulfilled, they will further move to level six which is an aesthetic level where they feel the need for harmony, order and beauty (Carlson, Buskist, Heth & Schmaltz, 2007) which are vital to the pursuit of knowledge; many modern technologies (e.g., aircrafts, spaceships, cell phone technologies, modern architecture, etc.) do require close attention to harmony, order and beauty. The fulfillment of level six will then move people to the last level, or the need for self-actualization, where they achieve a state of harmony and understanding which results from their engagement in achieving their full potential (Berger, 1994). Self-actualized people focus on themselves and attempt to build their own (self-)image and self-confidence, whereby they get ready to set and accomplish a goal. Higher-order needs (i.e., wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth, and self-sufficiency) are called B-needs or B-values (Maslow, 1968). B-needs cannot be fulfilled unless D-needs are satisfied first. Once B-needs are satisfied, individuals are able to develop a realistic self-image and attain self-confidence. Without a realistic self-image and an appropriate self-confidence, no one will be able to rely on his/her own capabilities which are vital to scientific explorations and discoveries. Motivation for exploration is intricately tied to
the explorer’s self-image and self-confidence. In Maslow’s view, self-actualized people possess innate ‘metamotivation’ which enables and motivates them to explore and reach their full human potential (Maslow, 1968). The implication of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs for educational systems is that, if society and sovereignty do not pave the way for the fulfillment of lower-order D-needs, one cannot expect to see self-actualized people who will explode their full potentials in the society. This implies that, the political powers that rule different countries can intentionally manipulate the interconnections between D-needs and B-needs so that individuals’ self-images and self-confidence would not develop and they would not move in the direction of self-actualization which may eventually be corrosive to the ruling systems’ grip on power.

Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Bloom’s taxonomy aimed at classifying learning objectives. Dividing educational objectives into (a) cognitive, (b) affective, and (c) psychomotor domains, the taxonomy is hierarchical in the sense that learners’ movement to higher levels is not possible unless they have already attained prerequisite knowledge and skills from the lower levels (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan & Brown, 2004). The hierarchy motivates educational systems to engage learners in a holistic learning experience which encompasses all three domains (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956), and is supposed to be taken as a vital and foundational element in education (Shane, 1981).

The cognitive domain has to do with knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking. According to Huitt (2011), the levels within this domain include:

- **Knowledge**: Showing memory of learned materials by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, answers, etc.
- **Comprehension**: Understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating the main ideas.
- **Application**: Using acquired knowledge to solve problems in new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.
- **Analysis**: Examining and breaking information into parts by identifying motives or causes, making inferences and finding evidence to support generalizations;
- **Synthesis**: Building a structure or pattern from diverse elements; and
- **Evaluation**: Presenting and defending opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

The affective domain describes people’s emotional reactions and consists of skills that determine how people feel others’ pains and joys. The target is the growth and awareness of feelings, emotions, and attitudes. This domain too includes five hierarchically-ordered levels:

- **Receiving**: At this basic level, learners passively pay attention and receive information.
- **Responding**: Learners actively participate in the learning process by attending to the stimulus and reacting in some way.
- **Valuing**: Learners attach a value to an object, a phenomenon, a piece of information, etc., and value-judge the knowledge they acquire.
- **Organizing**: Learners piece together different values, information, and ideas and accommodate them within their own schema by comparing, relating and elaborating on what they have learned; and
- **Characterizing/Internalizing**: Learners internalize a particular value or belief (as part of their character) which affects their behavior.

The last domain within Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives is the psychomotor domain (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956). This domain includes a hierarchically-ordered set of skills which describes learners’ capability to physically manipulate a tool or instrument. The levels of this hierarchy focus on development or change in behavior and skills. Although Bloom and his colleagues did not create any subcategories for this domain, Simpson (1972) proposed the following seven levels:

- **Perception**: Individuals learn the ability to use sensory cues to bring motor activity under control through sensory stimulation, cue selection, and translation;
- **Set**: Individuals get their mindsets (i.e., Mental, Physical, and Emotional sets) engaged in action
References


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