

Abstract

The present work is a philosophical inquiry concerning the interconnection between theories of human nature and education. It is often argued that the current mainstream education has an underlying dualistic assumption that the mind-body and the human-world are distinct and, therefore, do not value embodied forms of knowing. This dualistic notion creates a rift between learners and their environments, substantially impacting their learning. It also results in an exam-oriented and achievement-based education system that is not conducive to developing children's critical thinking and an exploratory mindset. One major factor that gives rise to this condition is an inadequate understanding of human nature. It is evident that any educational activity presupposes one or another conception of human nature because a particular philosophy of human nature shapes and influences a particular philosophy of education.

Therefore, understanding human nature is of paramount importance for designing or transforming education. An examination of several theories of human nature reveals that they are mostly the result of philosophical speculation and have underlying dualistic assumptions. However, recent empirical studies in cognitive science suggest that human beings are fundamentally embodied and embedded in the world. Being embodied means the mind is not separate from the body and the world, but it is dynamically coupled with both. Now, if human beings are fundamentally embodied, then education should also acknowledge this fact in its practices. But even though there is increasing evidence available in support of embodiment, we do not sufficiently appreciate it in our day-to-day lives or in educational discourse. This is the result of various psychological, neurological, and socio-factors.

To address this problem, a two-way approach is presented, which is termed as the outer and inner curriculum. The outer curriculum employs an "outside-in" approach, in which pedagogies are designed and imparted as per embodied principles. However, only changing external pedagogies will not help much without realizing our own embodied nature. For this purpose, an inner curriculum is required to make changes "inside out". The inner curriculum fundamentally helps us to realize our own embodied nature, which has got significant salutary effects. Therefore, the inner curriculum is seen as complementary to the outer curriculum. The core content of the inner curriculum is mindfulness meditative practices, which help us to become self-aware of our thoughts and sensations, which in turn helps to embrace our own embodied nature and inextricable relationship with the world. This kind of embodied approach to education, having a focus on both outer and inner curricula, helps to create a more democratic, collaborative, and holistic learning environment, thereby fulfilling the vision of educational thinkers such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Jiddu Krishnamurti.

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