

Contributions of Enlightenment Movement to Modern Education

Mustafa Altun¹ & Recep Bilgin²

^{1,2}English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Tishk International University, Erbil Iraq

Correspondence: Mustafa Bingol, Tishk International University, Faculty of Education, Erbil Iraq.

Email: mustafa.altun@tiu.edu.iq

Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v9i3p49

Abstract: The Enlightenment is an intellectual movement that emerged as a result of several centuries of processes in Western Europe. The main purpose of this movement is to save people from the tutelage and immaturity. In fact, where the process in which people use their own minds begins, the history of humanity underwent radical changes with the influence of other movements. In the environment where human societies and the systems that serve the society, underwent great changes, the education sector also went through the same processes. Post-enlightenment education, as a requirement of the main argument of enlightenment, was personalized and focused on the development of the individual. Educational models after this process have been in the understanding of educating people who are democratic, secular and fulfill their responsibilities towards their society and state. In addition, different philosophies and approaches in education emerged during this period. Contrary to previous periods, education has spread to the whole society and has been determined as a right that everyone will benefit equally.

Keywords: Enlightenment, Education, Specialization, Schooling

1. Introduction

In the medieval thought that existed in the long periods of humanity, the concerns of people to solve their basic problems such as security forced them to be protected by some people. In fact, feudalism, which was the form of government in the Middle Ages, came out of the security problem and developed with different dimensions in history. However, when humanity encountered the developments in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was on the eve of developments that would bring about changes in many areas of life. The events that triggered these developments affected humanity for several centuries and humanity finally reached the age of enlightenment. With this period, innovations and more complex rules began to emerge in every field. Education was also greatly affected by these developments and underwent some changes. The remarkable aspect of education in the Enlightenment period was that it became an activity for the whole society rather than the activity of certain groups.

Received: May 25, 2022

Accepted: July 29, 2022

Altun, M., & Bilgin, R. (2022). Contributions of Enlightenment Movement to Modern Education. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 9(3), 49-56.

2. Enlightenment

Immanuel Kant is one of the important representatives of the enlightenment, which emerged as the accumulation of several centuries of process, in the 18th century. Kant's statements clearly explain what enlightenment is. Kant, in his work "Was ist Aufklaerung?", explained enlightenment as the liberation of a person from the state of immaturity that he fell into. A person who does not show the maturity to find the truth with his own mind without the guidance of others will find the truth by thinking and daring himself in the new atmosphere brought by enlightenment. In this context, Kant's motto of enlightenment is "Sapere aude!" (Dare to know). This motto implies that human beings should have enough courage to use their own mind (Schmidt, 2018).

It is because of laziness and cowardice that people did not mature for long periods because they were happy to stay that way. Therefore, they accepted the tutelage of others over them. If people reject the tutelage of others by using their own reason, it is certain that others will show the dangers that threaten them because those who implement this tutelage will not want people to get out of this situation (Schmidt, 2018).

The Enlightenment has provided humanity with an opportunity to use its own mind and lead to new discoveries. However, the traditions and religions of the past were almost ignored and a new world in which the human mind reigned was tried to be created. During the Middle Ages, people's submission to authority and taking everything that came from authority for granted was due to cowardice and laziness. In the Enlightenment thought, religion and tradition that fed this situation were accepted as criminals and tried to be pushed out of human life. Although not all enlighteners think so, it can be said that the general opinion was this way. Kant, stating the reasons for this immaturity that people fall into, as cowardice and laziness, presented the use of reason and self-determination of people as a recipe for salvation to get out of this (Sharma, 2018).

3. Traditional Education during Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, education was in the hands of only certain groups and only rich people could benefit from education. In addition, only boys were educated at that time. There was no such thing as schooling because the masses did not have an understanding of education. Since education was in the hands of only some people, houses or religious temples were used for education. Therefore, during the Middle Ages, education was mostly in the hands of religious institutions and all subjects were taught to students there. Since religion was the most dominant institution on societies in the Middle Ages, all the subjects taught revolved around religion. Therefore, everything is taught on the axis of theology (Lerner, 1993).

One of the phenomena that most clearly defines the Middle Ages is war. People had to be trained to be ready for war in any situation. That's why even people who continued their education life were getting the education that would be necessary in wartime. In addition, wartime often interrupted the education.

In the traditional education model, the student was seen as a passive receiver and was expected to submit to the teacher's authority. For this reason, the authority seen in all social life and given great importance was also manifested in the field of education. The necessity of obeying the authority in the society emerged

in the form of obeying the teacher in the field of education (Välilmaa, 2019). This was precisely the point Kant criticized. It was stated by Kant that people who had to constantly submit to authority could not reach a maturity and could not use their own reason. The reflections of this were seen in the field of education as well as in all areas of life.

Since the education that continued throughout the pre-Enlightenment Middle Ages was religion-oriented, the language in which religion was told was dominant in education. For example, while the language of education in the Christian world was Latin, the language of education in the Muslim world was Arabic. Students were required to learn the grammar of these languages first, and rhetoric and logic lessons were taught accordingly. On the other hand, arithmetic geometry, astronomy and music, which were the most popular courses of those times, were indispensable courses in the curriculum of traditional education (Høyrup, 2014).

4. Education after Enlightenment

After the Enlightenment, there have been many transformations in humanity. First of all, the content and research methods of sciences have undergone great changes. In the new era, in which the scientific method and observation came to the fore, it was seen that the sciences began to develop very rapidly (Hadorn et al., 2008). These changes also rejected the traditional education model and the education model organized around religion has lost its validity. The data revealed by the new sciences has led to great transformations, especially in the Christian world (Netland, 2001), because it has been revealed both in this period and in the processes that started a few centuries ago that many of the understandings accepted by Christianity throughout the Middle Ages were wrong (Zafirovski, 2010). In this case, religion and traditional understandings were removed from the content of education. While modern sciences are developing much faster in the enlightenment period, we see that these sciences began to enter the educational content and take place in school curricula (Goldmann, 2009).

As humanity transformed into a more complex lifestyle with its social structure and institutions during the Enlightenment period, the functions of education, like all other institutions, increased. Education is no longer a phenomenon that is only in the hands of some groups and has begun to spread to the whole society. In addition, the philosophy of education and the content of this philosophy have changed significantly and have become suitable for the conditions of the time. In addition, expectations from education have increased considerably and over time, education has been made compulsory at some levels. We can examine these transformations under different items as follows.

5. Creation of a New Society

The rapid development of sciences gave birth to developments that would greatly transform human societies in this period. For example, the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in England was made possible by the invention of the steam engine. In the next period, industrialization gained a great speed. At the same time, a return from the peasant society that consumes only what it produces to the urban society that generates surplus production started in this period. In this period, when urbanization accelerated with migration, different situations expected from the content of education emerged. Modernism and urbanization that accompanied the Enlightenment aimed to spread education to the whole

society, and through education, people were both taught to be responsible citizens and it paved the way for specialization in certain professions (Goldstone, 2002).

The onset of the Industrial Revolution in the period following the Enlightenment caused radical social changes. The understanding of the Enlightenment that brought the reasoning to the forefront paved the way for individualization with the effect of modernism along with industrialization. In this period, the necessity of division of labor for urbanized people emerged. Cooperation in the peasant society changed into the specialization of people in certain areas in the urban society, and from this point the understanding of division of labor was born. For this reason, the necessity for everyone to receive education according to the field they specialize in emerged and the understanding that everyone received the same education in the previous periods was abandoned (Ozutku et al., 2018). Especially with university education, specialization was necessitated, and education was designed according to the new urban society. At the same time, as an important feature of this period, religious and traditional understandings and beliefs were abandoned and the secular human model began to emerge (Wren & Bedeian, 2020).

As a result, education underwent radical changes with the effect of enlightenment and other accompanying processes. Especially in modern society, secular and national identities have come to the fore instead of the identity formed by religion and traditional values. Therefore, education was designed to reveal this identity and a secular society. In addition, as a requirement of the division of labor and specialization required by the urban society, educational activities were restructured to train experts in the field.

6. Emergence of Philosophical Approaches to Education

Education is one of the most basic needs of modern society. The service expected from education to the modern society is to raise the human profile according to the needs of the society and the time. The greatest innovation that the Enlightenment brought to humanity was that everyone was invited to use their own mind and to reject the tutelage of others. In this case, state and society government has evolved towards democracy for people who need to participate in all kinds of decision-making processes. However, in order for the society to be brought up within the framework of democratic conventions, it was necessary to apply the appropriate philosophy. In this context, pragmatic philosophy emerged that would meet the needs of modern society. Thus, unlike the traditional society, it became necessary to provide education with a progressive approach suitable for a constantly dynamizing and changing society. Such a philosophical approach was needed in order for education to fit into the rapidly transforming modern dynamic society (Henig & Stone, 2008).

The Enlightenment's classification of all sciences in a unique understanding also emerged in the field of philosophy and this classification was also applied to education. Thus, different philosophical models that will meet the basic needs have guided the educational content.

Modern society has started to exhibit a much more complex network of relations with the post-enlightenment movements. In order to manage these relationships, which are constantly becoming more complex, in the right direction, education had to be presented with appropriate content from the very basics. The teacher-centered authoritarian education model in the traditional education has turned into a student-centered philosophy in the modern democratic society. In addition, the aim of educating students

necessitated a community-centered education. The necessity of restructuring the society and designing it according to the needs necessitated the adaptation of the education and its content (Duru, 2015).

In addition, movements such as nationalism and liberalism, which emerged in modern societies and showed their effectiveness in non-educational fields, also affected the educational content and the educational content was adapted according to the situations required by the dominant paradigms of these philosophical approaches. For example, nationalism, one of the most popular philosophical approaches of the 20th century, greatly influenced the content of education. In addition, liberalism, which tends to embrace all values and emphasize the freedom of the individual, has had an impact on education (McDonough & Cormier, 2013).

7. Education of Masses

During the pre-Enlightenment Middle Ages, education was in the hands of certain groups and was considered as the occupation of the aristocracy. People with high status in the society were able to give education to their children. Apart from this, there was no question of participating in the educational activities of ordinary people. The sharp stratification of people in social relations not only affected social interactions, but also affected which groups would receive education. For traditional societies that rely more on agricultural production, children were included in agricultural production processes rather than being included in educational processes. Therefore, education was only the occupation of the rich and aristocrats (Clifford-Vaughan, 1963).

However, urbanization, industrialization and modernization have great effects on modern society. The enlightenment process, which triggered all these, brought individuality to the fore and advised people to use their own minds (Popkewitz, 2013). In this period, the change in the mode of production and the realization of surplus production meant that time and financial resources could be reserved for education in societies. In addition, the necessity of division of labor made education even more indispensable (Gibson-Graham, 2003).

All these developments necessitated the spread of education to the society, and as the idea of equality emerged in societies whose layers were gradually disappearing, education began to be given to everyone. Thus, the process, where basic education has become compulsory for everyone in the modern world, was triggered with this understanding brought by enlightenment (Larsson, 2013).

In any case, a difference of the philosophy of enlightenment from the previous philosophical schools was to spread philosophy and philosophy education to the whole society by removing it from the hegemony of certain groups. This understanding has developed further and emerged in the modern world in the form of spreading education to the whole society.

Although the idea of spreading education to the masses and passing the whole society through education processes is the result of different processes and developments, it is possible to say that the understanding that led this developed in the enlightenment process.

8. Discussion

The Enlightenment movement emerged in a way that caused changes in all areas of life. This movement, which took human and the ability to use his own mind at the center, caused great social changes. In addition, it pioneered many other movements. The most basic argument of the Enlightenment thought was formulated as liberating humans from the tutelage of others. Since this was the thought that was perfectly compatible with the urbanization and modernization that emerged later, it gave them strength and had an accelerating effect on them. After this process, the world has never been the same as before. All systems from the social order to the economic order underwent radical changes.

Along with all these changes, the education system also experienced major changes. Previously, traditional education systems were operating for certain groups, while post-enlightenment education movements tried to spread education to the whole society. Thus, the order of societies changed, and social stratification started to fade away. The new education models brought by the Enlightenment both subjected people to general education and offered them the opportunity to specialize in a field.

In the new world order that emerged after the Enlightenment, tradition and religion were pushed into the background and efforts were made to create a secular human type, especially with educational activities. This type of person was also expected to be conscious of the citizen and bear responsibilities towards the state and society.

After the enlightenment period, educational activities were designed in accordance with the needs of the societies as a result of the urbanization and further complexity of the societies. Therefore, very different approaches and philosophies have emerged in education and have shaped education in accordance with the needs of people.

One of the most striking aspects of the educational activities of this period is the spread of education to the whole society and the creation of an environment where everyone can benefit from education opportunities under equal conditions. Thus, the influence of social strata in traditional orders began to decline and the transition between these social strata became easier.

9. Conclusion

The Enlightenment brought great innovations in the field of education, as it did in every field, and paved the way for an educational activity suitable for changing societies. The understanding required for this to be freed from the tutelage of others and to use one's own mind has been the trigger for all other processes. After all, changes from social systems to state systems emerged on the axis of this understanding. Since education is the institution that will cause the healthy functioning of all systems in societies, the education sector has naturally been affected by all these changes and has taken shape accordingly. The education system of the Enlightenment focused on individualization and student-centered education in the classroom, education that would bring social benefits out of school, and specialized education at work emerged. In addition, a modern, secular human model who fulfills its responsibilities towards the state and society is aimed in this model.

References

- Clifford-Vaughan, M. (1963). Enlightenment and education. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 14(2), 135-143.
- Duru, S. (2015). A metaphor analysis of elementary student teachers' conceptions of teachers in student- and teacher-centered contexts. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 15(60), 281-300.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2003). Enabling ethical economies: Cooperativism and class. *Critical Sociology*, 29(2), 123-161.
- Goldmann, L. (2009). *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment (Routledge Revivals): The Christian Burgess and the Enlightenment*. Routledge.
- Goldstone, J. A. (2002). Efflorescences and economic growth in world history: rethinking the "Rise of the West" and the Industrial Revolution. *Journal of World History*, 323-389.
- Hadorn, G. H., Biber-Klemm, S., Grossenbacher-Mansuy, W., Hoffmann-Riem, H., Joye, D., Pohl, C., ... & Zemp, E. (2008). The emergence of transdisciplinarity as a form of research. In *Handbook of transdisciplinary research* (pp. 19-39). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Henig, J. R., & Stone, C. N. (2008). Rethinking school reform: The distractions of dogma and the potential for a new politics of progressive pragmatism. *American Journal of Education*, 114(3), 191-218.
- Høyrup, J. (2014). Mathematics education in the European middle ages. In *Handbook on the history of mathematics education* (pp. 109-124). Springer, New York, NY.
- Larsson, S. (2013). Folk high schools as educational avant-gardes in Sweden. *Popular education, power and democracy: Swedish experiences and contributions*, 72-96.
- Lerner, G. (1993). *The creation of feminist consciousness: From the middle ages to eighteenth-seventy* (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press on Demand.
- McDonough, K., & Cormier, A. A. (2013). Beyond patriotic education: Locating the place of nationalism in the public school curriculum. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 8(2), 135-150.
- Netland, H. (2001). *Encountering religious pluralism: The challenge to Christian faith mission*. InterVarsity Press.
- Ozutku, H., Tekinkaya, Y., & Vural, T. (2018). Reflections of industrial revolution on work life in England and its projections in literature: An analysis on Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. *Business and Economics Research Journal*, 9(4), 839.
- Popkewitz, T. (2013). The sociology of education as the history of the present: Fabrication, difference and abjection. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34(3), 439-456.
- Schmidt, J. (2018). What sort of question was Kant answering when he answered the question: "what is enlightenment?" In *Rethinking the enlightenment between history, philosophy, and politics*. Lexington Books.
- Sharma, N. (2018). Contextualising Immanuel Kant's views on enlightenment in Bertolt Brecht's life of Galileo. *The criterion: An International Journal in English* 9(1).
- Välilmaa, J. (2019). *A history of Finnish higher education from the middle ages to the 21st century* (Vol. 52). Springer Nature.
- Wren, D. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (2020). *The evolution of management thought*. John Wiley & Sons.

Zafirovski, M. (2010). *The enlightenment and its effects on modern society*. Springer Science & Business Media.