

授業と学習：教育における実存主義と現象学

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Teaching and Learning: Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education

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Abstract

The Japanese universities are experiencing the biggest educational reforms in its history mainly due to decreasing number of children. The authors doubt whether the copies of educational reforms in the western countries will be successful in Japan. Especially the practices of faculty development at the university level cannot be carried out in the same manner as those in lower and middle schools, since in those faculty development programs of lower and middle schools, the attention is usually directed toward finding effective methods for educational practice. However, the authors assert that the Japanese university teachers should ponder over the meanings of teaching and learning. In this paper, the authors consider “teaching and learning” from the viewpoints of existentialism and phenomenology in education, and the goal of this paper is to provide a solid foundation for faculty development at the university level.

§1. Introduction

We do not know what we want; however we are responsible for what we are.

J. P. Sartre, Introduction to *Les Temps Modernes*
Method by itself cannot abolish the recalcitrancies of existence.

Buchler, *The Concept of Method*
...the thinker never thinks from any starting-point but the one constituted by what he is.

M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

The Japanese universities have been drastically changing their educational systems due to the decreasing number of children and the increasing ratio of high school students attending universities. The educational reform (33, 36, 40) such as employment of semester system, making syllabus, evaluation of lectures by students, entering and graduating in September, installation of office hour, introduction of GPA system, strengthen faculty development, and institution of evaluation system of teachers in such fields as research, education, social contribution, and university management, and so on. Most of the educational reforms mentioned above are the copies of the U.S. universities. The naming of these new systems is the same as those in the U.S., however the contents of these reforms are quite different from those in the U.S. For

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instance, while student bodies take surveys for the evaluation of teachers in the U.S. universities, in most of the Japanese universities, the university authorities are the ones who do the surveys. Moreover, in the U.S., a department chairperson will sit in the classroom of the teacher whose evaluation is quite low and will give some advices to improve his lecture. If the teacher cannot improve his skill, then he will be fired. However, since most Japanese universities employ their teachers for lifetime, no Japanese universities take such action against the teacher with poor performance in teaching skills. There will be severe discipline against the teachers who fail many students and hardly give good grades. In the U.S. graduate school of education, it is emphasized that the examinations are to test the students' achievement level and also more importantly for the teachers to evaluate their own skills in teaching. If the students' grades are so bad, it means that the teachers' teaching skills and methods are poor and he will be fired at worst.

It might be true that there are many university teachers who do not have any passion to teach and do not research at all in Japan. However, there are several reasons why we should not put blame strictly on those teachers. The first reason is the attitude of the Japanese students. In the U.S., European, and even Asian universities, the teachers hardly take attendance. On the other hand, in most Japanese universities, the teachers do take attendance. In Japan where more than 50% of high school graduates will advance to the universities, there are considerably large numbers of students who come to the universities just because "most of his friends in his classroom will go to university" or "his parents and/or his teachers recommend him to go to university." Therefore, they have neither eagerness nor motivation to study hard. We have heard that many students chat in the classrooms or often fall in sleep. The university education is not compulsory, and students come to university just because they would like to study and advance their carrier. Thus the attendance needs not to

be taken at all. Secondly, there is no clear line between a university that puts an emphasis on the teachers' research achievements and one that puts an emphasis on the teachers' achievements in undergraduate education in Japan. For example, at Columbia University in the City of New York that the author attended, there were about 32,000 graduate students and only about 800 undergraduate students. Therefore, at Columbia University the teacher evaluation is naturally carried out on the basis of the teachers' research achievements. In principle the teacher evaluation is carried out on the basis of the teachers' educational achievements in the universities that put an emphasis on undergraduate education, while it is done on the basis of the teachers' research achievements at the universities that put an emphasis on research. However, in some of the Japanese universities, the teacher evaluation is carried out not only on the basis of research achievements, but also educational achievements, contributions to university management, and contributions to society (37, 38, 39, 41). According to the total points in all four categories, the teachers' promotion and the amount of research money are determined. Only if weighted average is used to count the total points, the current new system of teacher evaluation could be plausible or acceptable, since many young university teachers cannot contribute much to university management or society and some teachers would like to make efforts in only research achievements or educational achievements. Anyhow, it is an era of sufferings for the Japanese university teachers.

By the way, it is needless to say that rich human resources have been sustaining its economic prosperity in Japan that is very poor in its natural resources. From this point of view, at the university level we think that education of young people, who will be the core of the Japanese society in the 21st century, is the most important factor for the Japanese economic growth. Considering that many Japanese university teachers do not know "kikan-junsi"(walking between students' desk), "dounyu,

tennkai, matome”(principle of allocating lecture time among introductory comments, main lecture, and summing up) or “how to utilize the words written on the chalkboard” and in classes such as English, natural science, humanities, and social sciences university teachers present reprints of lectures given in high schools that make college students disappointed at the university lectures and often absent from classes, which is called “go-gatu-byou”(Sickness in May), faculty development is the most important and urgent task for the Japanese universities. It is important to do general practices of faculty development exercised in lower and middle school levels such as teacher-training sessions. In those faculty development programs, the attention is usually directed toward finding effective methods for educational practice. However, more importantly most of the Japanese university teachers who have never learned anything about teaching should ponder over “teaching and learning”, we think. In this paper, we consider “teaching and learning” from the viewpoints of existentialism and phenomenology in education (5, 6, 13, 20).

§2. The Purpose of Education

David E. Denton, Israel Scheffler, Richard S. Peters, John Passmore, John Dewey, Gilbert Ryle, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, and A.C.MacIntyre (3, 28, 25, 24, 8, 12, 26, 2, 23) all agree in the rejection of a pedagogical principle that education is a process of a natural unfolding of inborn capacities and that an individual is shaped to conform to some approved pattern. On the other hand, they seem to agree that education should not be primarily concerned with mere transmission of a body of knowledge, and furthermore bodies of knowledge should not be handed on as “inert idea” but should be handed on in such a way that students could criticize or revise them. Moreover, they seem to emphasize that the stress in education should be placed on thinking (critical thinking, creative thinking, critic-creative thinking, and meditative thinking), individual explanation, and experimentation

(16, 17, 21).

David E. Denton (3,4) describes teaching as “a mode of being in the world” and “a moment of human interconnectedness,” even though, in his mind, teaching is neither describable nor analyzable with the language of things and cannot be reduced to anything other than itself. And also we can state that the difference between a teacher and students is obviously indifferent, since both of them are participating in the shared experience of exploring a common world. At the same time these thinkers associate teaching with rational explanation and critical dialogue, arguing that teacher’s genuine engagement in such dialogue marks the characteristic manner of teaching. The way of doing critical dialogue is the giving of honest reasons and welcoming of radical questions, a sort of interaction, which exposes the teacher’s underlying judgment to the critical evaluation of the students, and invites the students to form and submit their own judgment likewise to critical appraisal.

John Passmore’s argument (24) asserted that if a teacher refuses to allow critical discussion on certain subjects and reacts to dissent with anger, he is unlikely to encourage a critical spirit in his students, and therefore being critical can be taught only by men who themselves freely partake in critical discussion. If this could be done, then the students will take over their teacher’s critical standards and apply them to their own behavior and to the behavior of their fellow students. According to Dewey’s conception of growth (1, 9) as continuous learning from the active process of experiencing, education comes to be thought of less as something that a teacher is to do, and much more in terms of what children are to do. However, Dewey argues that there is still large scope for teachers in activity and guidance, and it is desired to enrich the activities of children rather than serving as a substitute for such activities. If this is done consciously and critically, the infallibility and arbitrary authority of the teacher disappear, and the teacher also becomes a learner and the learner also becomes a teacher.

In short, they all emphasize the importance of human interconnectedness of teacher and his students in teaching, e.g., respect for students as a person and openness to students.

Ryle (27) emphasizes the importance of offering students know-how and a “modus operandi” in such a way that they could go beyond what they are taught. Peters (25) explains this idea such that the good teacher is a guide who helps others to dispense with his services. In other words, a teacher should place special emphasis on “problems” to which the answer is not known, and only in that way he can prepare his students for the future. Dewey also emphasizes this point by asserting that it is very important to guide and assist a person to acquire habits, dispositions, and insights because they are essential if he is effectively to continue his own education through the continuous reconstruction of his experience. It is obvious to existing problems, but is to empower the young to think and to be creative in order for them to continue their own education after their school days are over.

Some teachers have conceived education as the process of training and indoctrination, and have engaged in the tasks of transmitting already acquired knowledge, of developing habits and attitudes of loyal obedience to the existing standards and institutions, and of implanting established moral and religious beliefs in the minds of children. However, training and indoctrination would fail utterly to produce the capacity for individual initiative and independent creative thinking, since what a child learns in school would be so insinuated into the experience of the child that he would be unable to think critically about them but instead the child would be conditioned to follow them unthinkingly. In short, training and indoctrination would rob him freedom to act as an intelligent human being. Nowadays, children have been trained to do immediately without reflection because historically education has not been concerned primarily with thinking. It has been an instrument to prevent thinking, since thinking breaks new ground, and

the breaking of new ground endangers old institutions and social structures. The persons who are in power in the established institutions unite in agreeing to minimize changes and in monopolizing the fruits of what goes on irrevocably. Education easily becomes under such circumstances an indoctrination of each generation to respect the order, which they find pre-existent, to induct one into the culture created for him, to generate in him respect for it and for its agents, to reconcile him to his lot in life, and to fore swear him to loyalty for the rights of others.

Thus, much of education, which concentrates on training, conditioning, and indoctrination, has served to manipulate the lives of children, for selfish private purposes. We think, if democracy is to be successful for the world and more importantly if education is to empower children to become a reflective, creative, responsible, and self-conscious body mind. Mere conditioning, mere training, and indoctrination should be replaced by “teaching” advocated by these educational philosophers.

§3. Teaching

The success of the educational activity depends on how efficiently and carefully the educational act is carried out. These educational philosophers, exception of Passmore, do not seem to concern, or at least do not explicitly concern, themselves with the difficulties of carrying out their ideal concepts of “teaching”. Passmore (24) recognizes that a difficulty arises from the fact the teacher’s training is very often not of a kind to encourage in him a willingness to participate in critical discussion. Otto F. Bollnow (2) points out in relation to risk and failure in education that the difficulty arises since the teachers consider it can be avoided with better and more skillful program of education. However, the risk will be an inner most essential characteristic of education as long as education is considered a form of association with free being, who are basically unpredictable in their freedom because they do not act

mechanically. For instance, some emphasize teacher's confidence and students' trust in him in order to achieve the educational goal. However, trust does not necessarily achieve results. Because trust always means exposing oneself without reservation to something that is improvable and unenforceable since it depends upon the unpredictable free will of another human being. Therefore, the one who trust must always become involved with his whole human strength, and in this way expose himself to possible failure, because his whole personality is involved, he is hit most deeply when there is a lack of success. In this case, the lack of success means a genuine failure through which the educator is somehow destroyed. So not only has the reputation of the educator been deeply hurt through this failure, and thus his prospects of succeeding in other instances will the one who has let him down have been injured, but who has also failed with all the other students.

There is another obstacle to point out involved in "teaching." The value of rational critical inquiry stands in the sharpest contrast to the prevailing social values. For instance, even if teacher is himself critical, there may be social pressure upon him not to admit that certain beliefs, certain practices, certain authorities, can properly be examined in a critical spirit. We are seriously concerned with the difficulty and the obstacle involved in "teaching" as a teacher. In order for "teaching" to prevail over training, conditioning, or indoctrination, we should make a great effort in advancing further studies of the risk and the success in education.

§4. The Function of Education

We think that these philosophers' differences stem from their aims of education and understanding of human individuals' distinctive way of being. Dewey (12) says that human existences are not under any obligation to conform the generalization that we make about them. Moreover, his principle that education is its own end has made it difficult to view children as raw materials to be molded to serve the purpose of industry,

the state, the church, or any other institutions. The principle has asserted that children are persons, and are to be given the respect in both school and home. Most importantly, an important question to human beings is who you are, but not what you are.

On the other hand, Peters (25) argues that the working classman literally lives in a different world from the professional man due to his limited vocabulary and his limited set of symbolic structures. It seems to us that Peters is thinking about education for a limited number of the elite who could be molded to serve the purpose of the state as leaders. Passmore, Peters, Ryle, and Scheffler (28) share their views on the assertion that education should be centrally concerned with the development of reason. Especially Scheffler (29) thinks that for such a concept we may turn to teaching, as connoting an initiation into the relational life, a life in which the critical quest for reason is a dominant and integrating motive. David Hume (18) once said that reason in something wholly passive and inert, but a passion is an original existent. However, Dewey (9) does not take either side, but rather suggests the co-operation of reason with experience, by arguing that a philosophic reconstruction which should relieve men of having to choose between an impoverished and truncated experience on one hand and artificial and important reason on the other would relieve human effort from the heaviest intellectual burden it has carried.

Denton (7) believes that the description of the mode of being called teaching will never be complete because a lived situation, a teacher in his world with others, can never be fully disclosed. Scheffler (30, 31) defines that teaching is an achievement term inferred from learning. Denton considers that Scheffler's definition is that if learning has taken place, we may infer that teaching has been done; if no learning occurs, as he defines it, no teaching has been done. Then, Denton (7) continues to argue, if an a priori definition of teaching is given, then it will be imposed on a lived situation, therefore the situation must be made to conform to the definition.

Thus coercion becomes necessary to make the situation conform to the definition.

The possession of a skill or a competence represents “knowing how to”, and skills and competencies are generally developed through practice, through repeated trial or performance. A skill or competence need not eliminate a further distinction of independent references to masterly achievement; Artistic technique is a good example. Dewey (8) once said that the artist is a masterful technician, and the technique or mechanism is fused with thought and feeling. Furthermore he remarks that the “mechanical” performer permits the mechanism to dictate the performance; it is absurd to say that the latter exhibits and the former does not since we are confronted with two kinds of habit, intelligent and routine.

Even though some of them admit that relatively routinizable competences, like critical skills, are abilities acquired through training, and that there needs to be room for training opportunities which will provide for the foundation of critical thinking, they think that performance is generally routine while intelligence is spontaneous and innovative, and that the main function of education is to automatize performance so that the main way may be set free. Dewey (10, 11) says that there are important habits and skills to be acquired as needed in meeting the varied situations of a growing life.

Another important thing to notice is that skills can be misused. Passmore (24) argues that the skills of a judge, or the skills of a critic, can be used nor misused. For training a person in skill or competence has no tendency by itself to make him not want to do unjust thing.

Therefore, teaching geared primarily to equip the young with competencies of skills does not carry the full connotations of “teaching”, although it is obviously important to equip the young with competencies of skills at the earlier state of education. It would not provide the young with freedom to act as an intelligent human being. We mentioned earlier the difficulty and the obstacle involved in “teaching”. From this point of

view, Passmore (24) warns, in relation to mere training skills, that if a teacher gives up the idea of teaching his pupils to be critical and slaves his conscience by training them in skills, this is not at all surprising. And he concludes that he should at least be clear about what he is doing, and even more important, what he is not doing.

§5. Concluding Remarks

We have studied the purpose of education, teaching and the function of education mainly from the viewpoints of existentialism and phenomenology in education. We should mention about the relation between the two thoughts. Søren Kierkegaard (19), who is the founder of existentialism, was not a phenomenologist, and at the same time Edmund Husserl, who launched the phenomenological movement, was not an existentialist either. However, Martin Heidegger (14, 15) published “*Sein und Zeit*” in 1927 and since then a simple distinction between the two is no longer possible. In his work, Heidegger made Kierkegaard’s question of human being and Husserl’s question of knowledge into a new synthesis. At the same time, someone might argue that we should not include John Dewey, who is a leader of American pragmatism, among existential phenomenologists. However, there are more similarities than differences between them. Even if they are quite different, we need a perspective partnership of both Dewey and existential phenomenologists, i.e., Dewey’s primarily explanatory analyses of experience and the existential phenomenologists’ descriptive analyses of experience, if we are to develop a workable theory of education.

There is an excellent book called “*ABC’s of Teaching with Excellence*” (35), however it is excellent in the sense that it presents us a variety of excellent educational practices at the university level. H. Usami (34) criticizes the comments in this book from his own point of view that his students are serious and do not talk or fall in sleep in his class, so the educational practices mentioned in the book are not useful. His criticism is

not necessarily true, considering at the situations in the classrooms of Japanese universities. However, if we copy the educational practices in the book that we think the best, then there will be risk that there will not be coherent educational practices, since for each subject the university teachers lectures 15 times per semester, if they copy the educational practices in the book, then there will be risk that each lecture does not have coherence as a whole. At the same time, if we do not understand the essence of "teaching" and "learning," we just become a copycat of those educational practices.

Lastly we should not forget the task of a university. Alfred N. Whitehead (32) thinks that it is to weld together imagination and experience because the tragedy of the world is that those who are imaginative have only slight experience, and those who are experienced have only feeble imaginations. Thus the way in which a university should function in the preparation for an intellectual career is by promoting the imaginative consideration of the various general principles underlying that career. Then we can conclude that the function of a university is the imaginative acquisition of knowledge.

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