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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MUSLIM AND WESTERN PEDAGOGUES' EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: CONTEXTUALIZATION OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION AS A UNIVERSITY'S DISCIPLINE

ABSTRACT: During the two recent decades, the world has witnessed that regional conflicts are increasing because of the type of relationships among civilizations. Most of these conflicts have been resulted from political, social, and economical relations among Muslim countries and Western countries at the Middle East. In such a situation, for reducing millions of people's sufferings, educational systems and especially higher education system surely play a vital role. Higher education system, through developing humanities-related disciplines, could increase levels of common understanding among intellectuals of the involved societies. On this score, comparative education has the power to encourage hearing other cultures out and international mutual understanding among people round the globe through educational system. Unfortunately, comparative education as a university discipline has not developed considerably at higher education systems in the Middle East countries. The present paper, first, tries to briefly explore the present situation of comparative education science in the region and, then, through comparing educational viewpoints of three Muslim pedagogues: Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali; and three famous educators of the West world: John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Dewey, demonstrate the possibilities of developing comparative education science as a university discipline in the Middle East. The comparisons between Muslim educators and their counterparts in the West, however, made in this paper have bilateral benefits.

KEY WORDS: Comparative education, educational perspective, Muslim, Middle East, pedagogues, Western, higher education system, and understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Following many Western countries, a historical description of comparative education exists in many societies. This description forms a public identity to prove that many logical and comprehensive attempts have been made to understand educational systems during the ages. This is an interesting subject to indicate those who have tried to make a precise survey of educational system. Some of these histories appear in travelogues and some others in disquisitions and printed books.

This is the case that the former President of the World Council of Comparative Education

Societies, in inspecting improving movement of the discipline, elaborates on a traditional type of philosophical and literary thesis writing and also reminisces about some pioneers of the field (Wilson, 2003). To our surprise, D.N. Wilson (2003) names thinkers such as Herodotus, Xenophon, and Aristotle, and only Ibn Khaldon from the world of Islam, the one who is popular as a sociologist rather than an educator (*cf* Oweiss, 1988; and Enan, 2007).

The fact that great Muslim educators have not been mentioned reminds us that many researchers of the field all around the world may not know them as properly as possible.

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On the other hand, Comparative Education (CE) discipline is still in embryo in many Islamic countries. Hence, it seems to be a mutual responsibility to establish and develop the discipline in Islamic world to explicate both its existing role among Muslim countries, and its position in developing international understandings.

As far as its first mission is concerned, it should be pointed out that CE, in spite of attempts made by many researchers in recent decades, is still deeply influenced by the old tradition of writing philosophical and literary disquisitions. For example, although CE as an academic discipline is still not familiar even for many educated people in Iran, few people might be found who are not heard of educational ideas of Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Sadi, Avicenna, Hafiz, Rumi, and Nasir Khosrow. It is completely understandable that their ideas and educational teachings, after such a long time of a few centuries, are yet informative and invigorating for Iranians. The lifestyle of these people who already have been considered as intellectual thinkers and sophisticated teachers can still be viewed as proper models for all teachers and students in Islamic world (Nofal, 1993).

Iranian comparativists, studying the lives and works of these educators, will not only explicate the position of the discipline in Iranian higher education system, but help the Iranian youth in exploring their identities (Rajaei, 2003). In addition, the works of each one of these educators can function as a rich source for explicating the very existing of CE in the Islamic world. CE, through analyzing and comparing educational views of these scholars with that of great educators such as Kant, Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Locke, and Dewey, shows that Muslims and Iranians have already benefited from very rich intellectual and educational sources.

It is one of the responsibilities of CE researchers to survey the history of education with no dogmatism. Hence, as said by one of the present writers, Abbas Madandar Arani (2003), the development of a Regional Comparative Education seems to be necessary. In fact, ideas of these Muslim scholars can contribute in the establishment of "Regional

Comparative Education Association" in the Middle East countries. The reason for such an association is their religious similarities and also the fact that they have written their books and disquisitions both in Arabic (main language for Arab countries) and Persian (for people of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and some parts of Pakistan, India, and Turkmenistan).

Unfortunately, a quick study reveals that Muslim countries have not made use of this rich intellectual source in order to establish and develop different educational programs (Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D.) in the field of CE. For example, Turkey is the only country in the Middle East in which a comparative education society has been founded. Iran and Saudi Arabia have CE program at Master's degree in a university each and the condition is even worse in other countries; B.A. students should pass a 2 or 3-credited course in the field of CE.

The second responsibility assigned to CE in Muslim countries can be analyzed based on R. Cowen's analysis and interpretations of academic atmosphere (Cowen, 1996 and 2000). Having considered a set of mainly political incidents during 1960-1990, R. Cowen coins the term "Read the Global" and shows the way in which scientific controversies and debates are being carried out in higher educational centers and universities.

Therefore, the writers of the present paper, based on the R. Cowen's analysis, believe that the common interpretations of scientific issues in the first decade of the 21st century affected by incidents like the attacks on September 11th, 2001, war in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as different terrorist attacks around the world might be considered as an analysis of the "Relationships between Civilizations". Most of these conflicts have occurred in the Middle East based on economic, social, and political relationships between Muslim countries and the West (Al-Harhi, 2007).

In such a situation, educational systems in general and higher education in particular would have a crucial responsibility in relieving people's sufferings. Higher education can increase a common understanding among educated people in involved societies by

developing humanities programs. So, it would be no more difficult to predict the mission of CE in this regard (Grant, 2000). CE has the capability to hear the voice of other cultures and to increase an international mutual understanding among people in the world through educational system. This might be considered an important CE mission.

The discipline can help us understand each other more deeply (Sepehri & Madandar Arani, 2007). Using great Muslim educators' books and disquisitions and comparing their ideas with that of famous international educators would be a good initiation for this recent mission. This way, common grounds between civilizations would be revealed and also unwelcome phenomenon such as "Islam phobia" would be avoided (Allen & Nielsen, 2002).

CE researchers in the Middle East, in deed, are supposed to make their best attempts to explain the point that human beings disregarding their nationalities and other differences are idealist people who seek to grow and rise. We do believe that recognition is the introduction to mutual understanding and CE, more than any other academic discipline, is able to bridge the gap between different civilizations and cultures (Madandar Arani & Abbasi, 2007).

Considering the above discussion, the present paper tries to give a brief comparison between the ideas of three Muslim thinkers with that of three great international educators to show the extent to which CE might have the capabilities to develop into an academic discipline with a crucial responsibility in Muslim countries.

A BRIEF COMPARISON OF THE LIVES OF AL-FARABI, AVICENNA, AND AL-GHAZALI WITH JOHN LOCKE, JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, AND JOHN DEWEY

Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali lived in the 9th, 10th, and 12th centuries respectively; while John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Dewey spent most of their lives in the 17th, 18th, and 20th centuries. The existence of lots of similarities between ideas and educational views of these educators makes

us ask ourselves if they had been ahead of their time and if education in general moves so slowly that in spite of passing the time the speeches made by these great educators never would lose their freshness, vigour, and enthusiasm.

A quick study of family backgrounds of these thinkers shows that Al-Ghazali and Jean-Jacques Rousseau belonged to the poor class people; and Al-Farabi, Avicenna, John Locke, and John Dewey were among middle class people. Nevertheless, they spent most of their lives in service of upper classes and authorities, except John Dewey. Occupationally speaking, Al-Farabi played the role of a consultant for the governor, Avicenna was a minister, Al-Ghazali became the university chancellor, John Locke was a tutor and also held a high governmental position, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a homeless rebellion, and John Dewey was a respected university teacher.

Al-Farabi died when he was just 53 (the youngest) and John Dewey lived for 93 years (the oldest), yet they both experienced a similar calm and riot-free life. Exile, imprisonment, and burning their books by the enemies and escape from hometown, are the inseparable part of life of Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Undoubtedly, although Jean-Jacques Rousseau is the greatest educator among these thinkers, he must be known as the unluckiest one. Based on his ideas and recorded works, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was discontented with his society and considered it a corrupt society (Boyd, 1963).

Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and John Locke were misanthrope and cloistered themselves (*cf* Fakhry, 2002; and Zarinkob, 2004). Avicenna was also seeking for such an opportunity while he never arrived at. John Dewey, criticizing the thought procedure, the practice of education and also proposing the relationship between democracy and education, had a critical view towards the society (Westbrook, 1991).

Hence, all these educators can be renowned as the "Reformists" of their time. In spite of many similarities between these educators, their large-scale impacts and reputations vary from one another. The three Muslim educators are native Iranians, were born in the eastern

part of the country and wrote their books in Persian and Arabic (Almasi, 1998). In the world of Islam, Al-Farabi, because of his vast knowledge in logic, philosophy, music, and politics is recognized as *the Second Teacher*, after Aristotle, called as *the First Teacher*. Many researchers have mentioned him as the first Muslim philosopher (*cf* Al-Talbi, 1993).

Ordinary people, because of the stories heard about Avicenna, knew him as the most skillful physician of his time, while he has been a great philosopher for the educated people. Avicenna's philosophical ideas made him unique not only in the world of Islam but also in the West. The compilation of Christian religious argumentations by Albert the Great, and particularly Thomas Aquinas, was greatly influenced by fundamental teachings of Avicenna (Halabi, 1980).

There are a lot of similarities between Al-Ghazali and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, perhaps more than the others. Al-Ghazali was a grand rebel like Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Escaping from school and secluding himself, he takes the responsibility of refining the religion from incorrect ideas. There is a known story about his seclusion. It is said that once Al-Ghazali dwelled in a mosque for a short time as a sweeper in Damascus, Syria. One day, he noticed that a group of seminarians were harshly debating on an issue and each of them was attributing his own idea to "Imam Mohammad" Al-Ghazali.

In order to settle their controversy, Al-Ghazali explained the issue in detail and solved their problem. Their surprise and astonishment in how could an old man in tattered clothes explicate such a complex problem gave him away. Al-Ghazali who wanted to get rid of seminarians, the lessons and the school move to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and then returned back to his hometown, Toos, eastern Iran (Zarinkob, 2004). He is the first scholar who warns everybody of possible dangers in philosophical interpretations of divine teachings.

The significance of John Locke relies on his sincerity of thought much more than on the depth of his philosophy. He expresses a moderate view on both philosophy and education. Through presenting the principle

that says "man's mind is like a blank sheet", John Locke had a wonderful influence on the two fields of politics and education (*cf* Aldrich, 1994; and Moseley, 2007).

Undoubtedly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the followers of behaviorism are beholden to John Locke. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his genius and exciting writings, created a set of impressive works which were extraordinarily influential in stimulating French public opinion and provoking people into a political revolution.

The writers of the present paper, based on their personal experiences, believe that, even in the present time in spite of passage of some centuries, many of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas and teachings in developing countries need to be interpreted and examined in detail. Let finalize this discussion in remembrance of John Dewey.

John Dewey, with his sincerity, modesty, and perseverance, reminded people all around the world that the initial stage of freedom of thought and democratic life must start from the school (Caspary, 2000). The spread of John Dewey's ideas made the teachers around the globe happy and hopeful that the realm of education is still capable of experiencing immense heights of intellectuality, such as Al-Ghazali, Avicenna, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We, teachers, disregarding our race, language, culture, and politics are proud of these great educators.

A QUICK CLARIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL VIEWS

In this part, we try to examine the ideas and educational approaches of these educators (Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali; and John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Dewey), according to their books and also in a comparative framework. Therefore, their philosophical school of thought, the position of education, and its basic elements (goals, methodology, curriculum, teacher, and learner) are summarized as follow:

First, Philosophical School of Thought.

These six scientists agree that man needs philosophy and philosophy plays a very basic role in everyone's life. Yet, their views towards philosophy are so wide that indicates specific

Table 1:
A Glance at Biography of Six Great Educators

Name	Personality	Living Environment
Al-Farabi, 870.	Ascetic, hermit, politician, musician, sociologist, the first philosopher in the world of Islam- <i>The Second Teacher</i> .	Establishment of Alexandria school – the religious branch – and promoting philosophical ideologies, propagation of different religious groups of Sunni, presence in the court of Seif-al-Dawla, the compilation of more than 33 books and disquisitions.
Avicenna, 980.	A short and tense life, pleasure seeking, politician, physician, philosopher.	Presence in the courts of kings in different parts of Iran, treating sick people, compiling more than 200 books and disquisitions.
Al-Ghazali, 1058.	Renowned and effective intellectual in the world of Islam, propagation of religious philosophy, fight against innovations in religion, struggle with mingling philosophical discussions with religious ones, the great renowned teacher at Nizamieh school in Baghdad.	Living during Abbasid Caliphs, political and military weakness of Abbasids, the age of moral degradation and rebellions, foundation of Ismailia movement, appearance of Hassan-i Sabbah.
John Locke, 1623.	Reticent, calm, revolutionary intellectual, freedom seeking, political thinker, individualist, liberal politician.	Authority of Anglican church, an upholder of moral principles and opponent for indulgence in religious reforms in society.
John-Jacques Rousseau, 1712.	Sensitive, revolutionary, a true lover of nature, man of letters, the greatest educator after Plato.	Exile in France and Prussia, preparation for the French revolution, change of religion, compiling educational and social books.
John Dewey, 1859.	Simple, humble, sympathetic, intellectual, perseverance, eloquent, hard work.	Authority of democracy in the late 19 th century, appearance of pragmatism, appearance and propagation of Darwinian ideas.

viewpoints of each of them towards the affairs such as culture, politics, and religion. For example, Al-Farabi pays much of his attention to the role of philosophy in politics; Avicenna is a philosopher who tries to adapt the Aristotelian understanding of philosophy and brings it in an Islamic tradition; whereas Al-Ghazali takes religion apart from philosophy and believes that philosophy hinders religious improvements. In this way, John Locke is a realistic philosopher; while Jean-Jacques Rousseau follows naturalism; and John Dewey supports pragmatism.

Second, the Position of Education. All these six scientists believe that the importance of man's education is undeniable. Al-Farabi, through his political philosophy, proposes the establishment of utopia and believes that education is a means for philosophers and scholars to guide individuals to get to happiness and prosperity in this world and salvation in the next (Haque, 2004). Avicenna considers education as a precise practice and planning for the purpose of child growth, goodness of family and social affairs

management, and finally mans' attainment of earthly perfection and divine salvation. Al-Ghazali takes education as a kind of self management by broadening knowledge and undergoing mortification in order to be highly esteemed (Almasi, 1998).

John Locke considers education as a way to prepare a safe and sound conscience and mind in a healthy body which would follow personal happiness and consequently social happiness. Jean-Jacques Rousseau views education as an art or technique which is manifested in guiding the trainees and also through obeying rules of natural growth in cooperation with the trainee himself. Also, John Dewey considers education as a reciprocal action between social environment and new generation based on present inclinations, reconstruction of experience, and social democracy (Westbrook, 1993). Even though Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali take a similar religious view toward education, John Locke has a physiological view about education; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau determining the educational stages becomes closer to John Dewey's viewpoints.

Third, the Purpose of Education. These great educators agree on the importance of attention paid to moral education and its definite necessity. For Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali, the ultimate goal of education is man's happiness and human well being; while John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Dewey pay more attention to practical functioning of education in individuals' lives.

Even though Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Avicenna have founded moral training on the basis of religion, John Locke focuses on educating manner as a basic factor. Jean-Jacques Rousseau takes "not doing evil deeds" to others as the basic principle of moral education; and for John Dewey, moral education is paying attention to experience and practice (Bailyn, 1992). Of course, it must also be pointed out that Muslim educators considering man as a two-dimensional being emphasize on training the soul as well as the body.

Fourth, the Methodology of Education. As far as methodology is concerned, these educators agree on the following grounds: attention on students' level of understanding, attention on accompanying of theory and practice when performing a given method, emphasis on the strength of imitation in children, and applying encouragement for better learning in students. While Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazali stress on educational role of habit; Jean-Jacques Rousseau believes that habits are nothing but adherence to students' nature. He is in line with John Dewey in opposing memorization and repetition drills in learning.

In addition, although these six scientists prefer encouragement to punishment in a learning situation, Jean-Jacques Rousseau disagrees with any kind punishment in any form. The final point is this that Al-Farabi and John Locke pay much attention to the important role of observation in learning, but John Dewey and Jean-Jacques Rousseau maintain that problem solving and discovery learning are more beneficial.

Fifth, Education Curriculum. All these six educators agree that education program must be based on teaching a profession each learner. In this procedure, the planned curriculum must

include *Reading and Writing, Counting, Ethics, and Games*. Al-Farabi, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Locke believe that teaching program during childhood period must be focused on the child senses. Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau call our attention to the basic role of government in educational planning. Al-Farabi believes that educational planning is a responsibility of the utopian governor (Henry, Nasr & Yahya, 1993).

Avicenna gives importance to the attention paid to political and economical problems; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau says that the government which has not been corrupted yet deserves an educational planning (Al-Naqib, 1993). Al-Ghazali, Avicenna, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Dewey have similar ideas about stages of education according to human growth.

Sixth, Teacher. There are several common aspects in these educators about the role and position of teachers. They consider the followings as the characteristics of a good teacher: discovering students' talents and capabilities, focusing on students' individual differences, and getting interested in teaching profession. Al-Ghazali and Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasize that the teachers must not expect to be paid for what they are doing. Al-Ghazali believes that teachers should teach for God's sake and blessing – to gain spiritual reward. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other hand, construes the teacher's job as a humanitarian activity that would be so beneficial for the society in the future.

Al-Ghazali, Avicenna, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau believe that teachers function as students' models. Al-Ghazali asserts that teachers must gain and keep the respect of their students and try not to lose their own face at any time and in any condition. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, however, says that teachers must play the role of students' an intimate friend and even a playmate (Simpson, 2006).

Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi emphasize the importance of social relationships – particularly cooperation between students with each other and their teacher. John Locke believes in private teacher's effectiveness and individual education and also says that the school has nothing to do except

preventing students' creativity and innovation development (Moseley, 2007). And finally, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey have similar ideas in the teachers' role in preparing students for learning activities and provide them a suitable learning condition.

Seventh, Student. These six scientists agree in the presence of individual differences among students and assert that the development of individual talents and aptitudes needs close attention in every instructional setting. Cooperation and teamwork are also the stressed issues in education from the viewpoints of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, and John Dewey. Jean-Jacques Rousseau agrees with the principle of cooperation and social collaborations. At the same time, however, he believes we cannot let our students enter the social interactions based on their natural dispositions and this is because the society is corrupt for the moment.

Al-Ghazali, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Locke have similar ideas in preventing children from having friendly relationships with their badly-behaved peer groups. Al-Ghazali, emphasizing on the aforementioned cases, approaches to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's negative education to some extents. Their differences, however, lie in the fact that Jean-Jacques Rousseau denies any direct education – good or bad – up to the age of 12 years.

Also, Al-Ghazali, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau agree that the child needs to develop a sense of tolerance in dealing with difficulties and problematic issues in order to get experienced and maturity. Their difference is that Al-Ghazali agrees with both compulsory and arbitrary procedures, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau believes that education must be chosen freely (Westbrook, 1991; Caspary, 2000; and Simpson, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Le Thanh Khoi, in his message written to the Persian version of his book in 1992, addresses his Iranian readers and calls their attentions to an important point. He remarks that although comparative education, in its daily development, considers the experience of other countries, cultures, and social groups, it must take full attention to the

concepts, theories, and procedures taken from a particular geographical environment too (Khoi, 1981). In spite of Le Thanh Khoi's informative warning, it should be pointed out that comparative education, as an academic discipline, is very young and unknown in the Middle East yet. Perhaps and bitterly, it might be said that unfortunately the Middle East which is a generating source of international conflicts and clashes, especially in the recent decade, has not made use of the discipline's capacities in favor of a better understanding of other cultures and decreasing people's sufferings.

Comparative education, as an academic course, has been included in the syllabus of *educational sciences* program in Iranian universities for four decades. Yet, because of a number of reasons such as lack of appropriate information about its purposes, methodology and procedures, unavailability of innovative comparative research methods, and more importantly lack of enough experts in this field in our universities, comparative education has not developed as much as it should.

The comparisons between Muslim educators and their counterparts in the West made in this paper have bilateral benefits. On the one hand, researchers, students, and practitioners of educational systems might come to the idea of making use of their historical backgrounds to develop the discipline. And, on the other hand, the paper would direct the focus of attention of CE (Comparative Education) practitioners to other society's experiences. A brief comparison of educational views of these renowned educators shows that there are considerable instances of similarities between their ideas. The basic question, however, is why our understanding of global issues and problems is so different.

We do believe that CE in a region, like the Middle East with so many crisis and conflicts, can help us find a proper answer to this question. Mark Bray, the former President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, in a message written for the Persian version of his book in 2005, points out that CE emphasizes on the importance of paying deep attention to other cultures and accepting pluralism in educational sciences (Bray, 2001).

It is definitely obvious for the Middle East comparativists that the characteristics of CE studies would be impossible to understand unless a precise knowledge of the tortuous route passed in the previous centuries are at hand.

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