



Educational Philosophy and Practices of Mary Wollstonecraft and Nel Noddings

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ABSTRACT

Each academic discipline has its own philosophical underpinnings, collection of fundamental ideas and conceptual framework. Education in the liberal arts is not an exception. In terms of educational philosophy, both the east and the west have a long history. World-wide educational practises and planning are influenced by the theories, beliefs and values that the government and society aim to achieve through education. Our goal in conducting this research was to present Wollstonecraft's early feminist viewpoint on education and to make a strong argument for the influence of Noddings' Theory of Care on moral education and educational philosophy. Despite the fact that Wollstonecraft and Noddings were born hundreds of years apart, both of these educators had a profound influence on the policies and practises of modern education.

Keywords: *Nel Noddings, Care, Mary Wollstonecraft, Theory of Care, Education, Ethical Components, Feminist*

Introduction

Each academic field has its own philosophy, set of overarching principles, and conceptual framework (Ansary & Ansary, 2023). Education as liberal arts is not an exception. In regards to philosophy of education, both the east and the west have a rich history. The theories and philosophy of education must be understood by all post-graduate students of education (Abowitz, 1999; 2016; Abowitz & Roberts, 2007). Theories, philosophies, and ideals that the state and society want to advance through education all have an impact on educational practises and planning around the world (Adhikari & Saha, 2021d; 2021e, 2021f).

Mary Wollstonecraft and her Feminist Approach towards Education

Mary Wollstonecraft's writing is characterised by a deep and urgent concern for education, particularly the upbringing of girls and women. This concern penetrates her work until the abrupt end of her career (Adhikari & Saha, 2023). Her most major work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, starts as an appeal for the equitable education of women and includes an ambitious and long-range proposal for a national school system. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, the title of her first book, speaks for itself. The growth of morally upright and rational individuals, however, who in turn may help construct institutions of society that are more progressive and set a stronger social tone, could have been aided by education. Experience, rather than rote instruction, is the best way to instil in youngsters' solid values and decent behaviours. According to Wollstonecraft, a rigid devotion to truth, right submission to superiors, and condescension towards inferiors are the three main tenets of early education (Adhikari & Saha, 2022a). Similar to contemporary writers who criticise female education (Adhikari & Saha, 2022c; Adhikari et al., 2023) over the mindless growth of outer skills like sketching and singing in so far as ladies are concerned, Wollstonecraft promotes the formation of a strong moral awareness. She argues for a logical acceptance of current social norms.

Unfortunately, most female boarding schools tend to generate monotonous duties, meaningless manners, and nasty role models. It is best to keep children away from these institutions unless they are to be left with servants, where they run the risk of even worse corruptions (Ahmed, 2019). The mother of the children is the best person to impart this lesson because early education's primary objective is to equip a woman to carry out the significant responsibilities of a wife and mother. However, just because there is a strong emphasis on household responsibilities throughout does not mean that Wollstonecraft's works' feminism is completely absent. For instance, early marriage should be avoided since moms who have just emerged from infancy themselves cannot be anticipated and depended upon to develop a child's comprehension (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

The natural flow of thought and emotion shown by a mind-illuminated face, as well as unaffected manners that obscure innate sincerity and conceal the true emotions of the heart, should not be replaced by elegant apparel and made-up faces. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft can no longer support private schooling due to the significant shift in her opinions. When children work together and actively solve problems rather than relying solely on adults, they

are better able to develop their capacity for independent thought. Children's friendships, frank dialogues and shared confidences provide the best foundation for a straightforward, kind and intelligent personality. Social affections require an environment of equality to develop. Wollstonecraft urges the creation of formal day schools where children can study together while still enjoying the conveniences of home and keeping their links to them. She does this in an effort to strike a balance between the restriction of an adult-dominated private education, pedagogy and supervision of boarding institutions (Wollstonecraft, 2015).

However, the possibility that children's futures might be decided by their ability rather than luck highlights the radically revolutionary nature of Wollstonecraft's imagined school of the future. Similar to Wollstonecraft's utopian and prophetic concept of coeducational, publicly funded, globally accessible education, the second Vindication demonstrates a fundamentally different way of thinking about the connection between children and adults in general (Adhikari & Saha, 2022b). By emphasising proper respect to superiors, *Thoughts on Education of Daughter* has preserved children in their historical position of subjection to adults, at least those of the same or greater social status which the later feminists talk about in their literary works like Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* (Adhikari & Saha, 2021g).

Educational System Based on Nel Noddings and Theory of Care

For her contributions to educational philosophy, educational theory and care ethics, American philosopher and educator Nel Noddings has garnered recognition from all around the world. Given that the Theory of Care by Nel Noddings provides a relational and practical account of morality and moral reasoning, it seems reasonable that it would have a significant impact on moral education and the ethics of teaching (Noddings, 1995b). However, it has now made an impact on a number of academic areas, including nursing education, the delivery of instruction and curriculum, and the philosophy of education (Noddings, 1993). Educationists have emphasised the value of morality, logic, and common sense for millennia (Adhikari & Saha, 2021d; 2022; 2023). Educational ethics have an impact on the educational system's efficacy. It offers practical guidelines and defends the rights of both educators and pupils. It has provided moral education with a fresh, connected viewpoint to use. However, this theory's impact on educational philosophy and moral education, as well as how these sectors have profited from it, have not yet been fully examined. The disciplines of moral education and educational philosophy overlap, according to Montessori as well. As a result, detailed discussions regarding these subjects frequently occur simultaneously (Saha & Adhikari, 2023a; 2023b; 2023c; 2023d; Adhikari & Saha, 2021a; 2021b).

According to Noddings (1989), education's goal is to create better adults who are capable, caring, loving and likeable. Because of its emphasis on testing, Noddings (1984) asserted that the American educational system is in serious jeopardy. Students who attend schools that do this make good test takers but poor knowledge translators because they struggle to apply what they learn in the classroom to their daily lives (Noddings, 1995a). By rethinking the purpose of true education and resetting school priorities, the care-based education system seeks to expand the definition of the ideal education (Noddings, 1996). Noddings asserted with her theory of Theory of Care that traditional methods of education are incapable of educating the child as a whole to be a better person and to care morally. She claims that in order for pupils to learn how to care ethically, they must have the opportunity to do so while in school (Noddings, 1989, 2002a, 2003a, 2003b). Anything that prevents this should be viewed as problematic and should either be changed or supplemented with other care-based teaching activities (Saha et al., 2023).

Redesigning the curriculum broadly is one of the modifications Noddings suggested in order to make it meet the diverse requirements of the students and involve them in the learning process. In Theory of Care, the significance of diversity and inclusivity in learning environments and in textbooks for students is emphasised (Adhikari et al., 2023). By doing this, it is hoped to reduce instances of exclusion and marginalisation of particular racial, religious, and socio-economic groups of people while also improving the chances of academic survival for all students. The curriculum needs to be reorganised in order to be consistent with teaching care in schools because of the practical implications of Noddings' holistic perspective. If this restructure solely seeks to increase pupils' academic knowledge, it might mean dropping the college-bound curricula that are currently offered in schools (Sockett, 2009). The scope of the subject matter be quite broad in a school curriculum if the educators and curriculum designers are serious about training the student for improvement as a whole person (Stitzlein, 2013). Students will be able to select what they want to learn and how they want to learn from a large range of solid possibilities within a comprehensive curriculum created by Theory of Care. While offering a fresh understanding of education and a new purpose for schools, this theory also advocated changes to school culture and educational administration.

Noddings is a staunch advocate of expanding the number of schools developed in order to decrease the number of pupils enrolled in classrooms. Noddings (1989) hypothesised that conditions in schools might gradually alter if the enrolment was reduced. There would be more time for teachers to get to know and care for their kids. Schools may become safer if teachers have time to get to know their pupils since they would be able to alert pupils to problems more immediately and readily (Adhikari & Saha, 2021c).

According to Noddings, moral issues are not as simple as math issues to solve in real-life situations, including educational settings (Sockett, 2009). Mathematical equations are the written representations of static conditions, which don't vary depending on the situation or the identity of the student solving the equation. As a result, a student should approach these issues using pre-established formulas. Unfortunately, moral issues that arise in educational environments are contextual, which means that a student's response to a moral issue will depend on the situation as well as their personality and character. According to Nodding (2003a), for people to understand this fresh and different perspective on moral education, they need to interact with the people who are both effecting and impacted by the issue. Noddings opposed both the application of norms in moral education for pupils and the globalisation of her idea if it meant standardisation.

Conclusion

Even during a time when mentioning Wollstonecraft's name was often intended to mock or disparage her, her ideas on women's education penetrated modern writing across a wide range of genres, from domestic fiction to pamphlets on educational reform. Today, it is especially important to consider Wollstonecraft's insightful critique of the institutions, customs and educational disparities that contribute to social injustice. As a relational and useful theory of ethics and moral thinking, Noddings Theory of Care naturally has a significant influence on moral education and the ethics of teaching. However, its influence has spread to other areas of education, including nursing education, curriculum and instruction, teacher preparation, and educational philosophy. It has provided a different, relational perspective to be used in moral education. However, its impact on moral education and educational philosophy, as well as how this theory has contributed to these fields, has not yet been examined in depth. Our goal in doing this study was to provide how education was viewed centuries ago by Wollstonecraft, the first feminist and a compelling case for Noddings' Theory of Care's influence in the areas of moral education and educational philosophy. Though Wollstonecraft and Noddings were born centuries apart, both the educators have paved very deep impact on today's education, its policies and technicalities.

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