

Assessing Relationship Between Education and Politics: Why is Education So Important?

Zuxian Li*

Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510275, China

u0903402@gmail.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This paper aims at addressing the relationship between politics and education. When people try to understand these two terms, they would first define the notion of education, and then define the term politics as well. By assessing education and politics, it will be clearly that these two concepts are interrelated. In this piece, in order to introduce the relationships between education and politics, notable politicians, scholars and experts have been discussed. By exploring their journey, includes both academic and political period, it should be noted that highly educated people are more likely to influence politics. When people have opportunities to be educated, they are able to use their knowledge to be success.

Keywords: educational process, politics, moral standards, political decision, notable scholars

1. Introduction

When people examine connection between two notions, namely education and politics, many of them may argue that they are less connected, they believe that the fundamental role of education is obtaining knowledge, finding proper jobs, and improving quality of their lives. Regarding the politics, in their mind, it is irrelevant to them unless they are engaged into political affairs. Despite two terms are separated from each other at a glance, it is noteworthy that education plays significant roles in the political activities. If people trace back to the ancient world, the relationship between education and politics is clear. Greece, which is considered as the origin of Western political philosophy, has great impacts on the world politics. At the time when Greece was booming, the idea of educating people to defend state had been disseminated, one way to secure a state was educating the youth, [1] noted by Ellwood. Therefore, education has huge influences on politics, this is partially because when people have opportunities to be educated, their decision-making will be driven by rationalities but not personal preferences. Educated people are more likely to use their knowledge but not emotion in their political career. As a result, political decisions would be implemented properly. To sum up, educate is not outdated in any time and any society, we should concern on the education, awareness the significant role of education in influencing the politics.

1.1. What is Education?

Though education has been defined by various experts, scholars, educators and so forth, and bunch of concepts have been pointed out by different researchers, it is still hard for us to elaborate education

explicitly. As a sort of abstract concept, the way people used to define education is more complicated. In order to define education, different dimensions should be considered.

Let get started with Plato. Plato was a notable educator and philosopher in the ancient Greece. His political and educational ideas were stemming from his teacher Socrates. According to Plato, the reason why people should get educated is that this is an approach to make social justice. Precisely speaking, the question is how to build a harmonious society? Plato stresses the importance of equal education, once all groups of people, concretely speaking, no matter ordinary or not in the society, are fairly treated and have same opportunities to get educated. This is a good way for them to build closed relationship, as a result, these people could get along with each other harmony because they are fairly educated at the early age. Moreover, Plato claims that unjust society is largely due to unqualified politicians, which means less educated people are not good at running the political system. [2]

Second, education, as implied by Peters, could be more convinced when people examine it by various facets. He defines education by looking at the task-oriented approach. In his piece, he indicates that the basic goal of education is to let student learning from others, specifically teachers. As a teacher, the fundamental role is, in fact, encouraging learners to begin studying, once people are willing to learn, and aiming at master knowledge, that would be meaningful for teachers. This is, fairly speaking, the main task for teachers and other educators. [3]

Third, education links to moral achievement as well. It is fairly to state that the educational process is relevant to the development of men, aiming to be a better man in the society, people should be encouraged to learn values, which have been existed in the society. One important notion, namely responsibility, is a sort of value which is championed by the whole society. Many of us regard responsibility as a significant factor for one's development because it is the reflection of specific values, norms and moral. Once a man realizes the importance of responsibility, then he would be better understanding of the social moral. This is the moral-oriented approach to educate people. [3]

How do people define education, it is clear that education should be put into the social context. Education is not only a way of learning, but also an approach which many of us need to use to evaluate their moral standards. By combine knowledge and moral together, this is the essential meaning of education.

1.2. What is Politics?

The same as education, the notion politics has been defined by different people as well. As noted by Murray Thomas, politics could be considered as a way to gather power. In his piece, he emphasizes that politics is a sort of relationship which a group of people has great impacts on other groups of people. [4] Murray Thomas pointed out an interested argument which seeks to elaborate politics in a broadly way, he stresses that politics is basically a term which is highly related to power. In order to maximize power, politicians should use various approaches to influence on people's behaviors. After that, politicians are able to implement their political decisions.

Another scholar has defined politics in a different perspective. As Jürg Gabriel pointed out, if people are seeking to define politics, they should combine both the individual and common interests together. Since different people have totally different demands, it is difficult for us to treat different groups of people as the same, precisely speaking, politics should concern on all groups needs. [5] Jürg Gabriel has emphasized a significant argument which is linking the general and personal wiliness to define politics. It is clearly that this definition is more likely provide sufficient evidence to elaborate the term of politics.

2. Notable Politicians, Scholars and Experts

So far, the basic concepts of education and politics has been discussed, but how are they interrelated? To what degree does education influence on politics? How educated peoples' decision-makings impact on the world politics? These questions are playing fundamental role in interpreting the relationship between education and politics. Let introduce the connections between education and politics by examining various politicians, scholars and expertise.

2.1. Woodrow Wilson

As a famous politician in the American history, President Wilson has far-reaching influences on the political science. His excellent dedications of liberalism theory are marked as one of the important branches of IR theory.

Prior to his presidency, President Wilson got his Ph.D. degree at the Johns Hopkins University, it makes him as the only president who has the Ph.D. degree in the American history. During his presidency, the world was chaotic, at that time, World War outbreak among European countries. The debates regard whether the United States should join the war or not were frequent. President Wilson showed his superb strategies during the turbulent period. At the beginning, the United States was neutralized because President Wilson claimed that the isolated policy was optimal for the United States. With the development of the War, since the situation was changing, President Wilson sent the U.S. troops to the Europe, and assisted allies won the war. The remarkable contribution in President Wilson's foreign affair career was the Fourteen Points. This theory is a milestone of IR theory because the new branch of IR theory, namely Liberalism, has been introduced along with the development of the Fourteen Point. [6]

Given that President Wilson's superb academia achievements, he was able to handle with complicated international affairs at that tremendous period. His theory namely Fourteen Points, has far-reaching influences on the international affairs. Because of his contributions, the United States avoided to enter the war in the early time, and benefited from this decision.

2.2. Henry Kissinger

Another remarkable politician/scholar is Henry Kissinger. His outstanding contribution to deal with the Sino-U.S. relationship has deeply influence on the international affairs.

Henry Kissinger is a Chinese affair expert, he plays an important role in the normalization of the Sino-U.S. relationship. In his early life, he enrolled at Harvard University and received Ph.D. degree. After that, during the Nixon administration, he was appointed as National Security Advisor.

Prior to the early 1970s, China was isolated from the West World, the communications between China and the United States were rare. Because of the Cold War, the tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union increased during this time. Henry Kissinger, as the National Security Advisor, had to rethink about the Sino-U.S. relations. In 1971, Henry Kissinger made his secret visit to China, this was marked as the watershed of the Sino-U.S. relationship. [7]

Henry Kissinger, as a senior diplomat, is influential in the international affairs. His dedication of normalizing the relationship between China and the U.S., is not only beneficial to China and the United States, but also the whole world. Back to the Cold War era, when the relations between the Soviet Union and the U.S. were at risks, his decision of secretly visited to China shocked the global community. This is largely due to his educational career at Harvard University, where he read multiple books, finished his dissertation, and then got Ph.D. degree. Later, he put theories into the practice.

2.3. Yuanpei Cai

Yuanpei Cai, a notable Chinese educator, has remarkable contribution to Chinese educational system.

Cai Yuanpei, lived in a revolutionary period, has a legendary life. In his early life, by his effort, he received degree from the Qing dynasty, and was appointed as an officer. This was an optimal job for Chinese at that time. Nevertheless, Cai Yuanpei was deeply influenced by the Western thoughts, and later he went to Germany and received degree.

Later, he returned to China and was appointed as the President of Peking University. During the time he was at Peking University, he reformed the traditional educational system, renewed and introduced various courses, and invited different professors, scholars, experts and so forth to Peking University. The most significant contribution to the Chinese education was that he set a principle to be an excellent student. This principle includes various dimensions which are related to virtue, beauty and health. Moreover, he encouraged new thoughts at Peking University, it facilitated the New Cultural Movement, and fundamentally influenced politics at that time. [8]

Cai Yuanpei's educational theory has far-reaching influences on the Chinese educational system until now. Currently, the educational reform in China stresses we should let every student not only study well, but also know what is beauty, and how to become beauty. It is clearly that the reform is largely influenced by Cai Yuanpei. It should be noted that due to Cai Yuanpei's efforts, Peking University became a center for new thoughts, new values and new culture at that time, it significantly impacted on politics.

2.4. Angela Merkel

The former German Chancellor Angela Merkel demonstrates the strong relationship between education and politics. Prior to her political career, she held doctorate degree, meanwhile, she was a notable scientist in the chemistry field. [9] When she became the Chancellor, she was able to deal with the international affairs in a rational way and was considered as a successful leader in German history. Europe encountered great crisis when she was the Chancellor of Germany, many serious problems, for instance, refugees, financial crisis and the relationships with Russia and China, should be solved immediately. More importantly, these issues were complicated, it was impossible to solve the problems without a qualified leader. Seriously, if problems could not be solved properly, they would be even worse than before.

Angela Merkel was elected as the German Chancellor at the moment when both Europe and Germany were in momentous period. Facing the crisis, she exerted outstanding political methods to dealt with every single problem. The most valuable legacy is that her rationalities in solving international affairs. Let put it concrete, she united all kinds of political entities together, and negotiated with them by using moderate terms. By doing so, she earned reputations from other political leaders. As a result, problems were solved in a comfortable climate. By comparison with the former U.S. President Trump, who was extremism, and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Angela Merkel's notable legacy in solving the crisis has given her applaud all over the world, she was even considered as the real leader of the Western world in some cases. [10]

Angela Merkel's story has proven that a people, who is highly educated, could deal with political affairs in proper ways, and many tough issues could be solved.

3. Debate

Clearly, higher education has fundamental impacts on the political making, it should be noticed that links between education and politics is indirect. It is effective when people who get educated and could use what they learned from the universities to make political decisions.

Nevertheless, some people argue that education triggers inequalities in the political field. They assert that higher educated people in the Netherlands could obtain various resources easily, they have more opportunities to influence on the politics, it is unfair for people who are less educated. Eventually, the inequality between higher educated and lower education is inevitable. [11]

Based on my observation, higher education is more likely an effective way for people to engage in political affairs, but people who are not get high education could involve in the political affairs as well.

First of all, the article only takes the Netherlands for instance, to be honest, this is insufficient. It is difficult to make an argument by only one or two examples. Due to lack of resources to prove the argument, it is less persuasive.

Second, people who are less educated also have chances to influence on the political decisions. In this piece, President Wilson, Henry Kissinger and Cai Yuanpei have proven that how important education is. They are famous politicians, scholars and experts. In contrast to President Wilson and Henry Kissinger, who received Ph.D. degree, Cai Yuanpei only studied in Germany for three years, he didn't receive Ph.D. degree, but still played significant role in Chinese political reform at that time.

Thus, it is hard to conclude that higher educated people have more chances to participate in the political affairs, and because of the education, political inequality has been triggered.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, by addressing different sorts of dimensions, obviously, education plays significant roles in politics. When people are highly educated, they could better understand what are the basic principles they should follow, and then integrating political decisions with high moral standards. Frankly speaking, when politicians aiming at making grand strategies, they rely on specific knowledge which is related to the decision making. Without certain knowledge in that field, they are less possible to make proper decisions. As it has been talked previously, President Wilson, Henry Kissinger and Cai Yuanpei, all of them prove the importance of how higher education influences on the politics. Their political decisions are in essence depending on what they have learned from the academy, as a result, they are able to use reasonable thoughts to deal with complicated international relations, specifically relations among different countries. History has proven that their political thoughts are properly in handling the relations, for instance the WWI and Sino-U.S. relationship, these issues were super complex, politicians should take these issues seriously. As we know, they successfully solved these issues, the WWI ended due to the United States joined the war, China and U.S. built diplomatic relationship by the efforts of Henry Kissinger. Thus, there is no doubt that education has significant influences on the politics.

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