



AN ONTOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU'S CHILD - CENTRED THEORY OF EDUCATION.

Aloysius O. Dimgba*

aloydingba@gmail.com 08064769863

Abstract

This paper is an ontological evaluation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's child-centred theory of education. Its objective is to show that the guidance of an experienced adult is indispensable in children upbringing. In his Emile, Rousseau demonstrates his believe that children should be allowed to learn by their natural impulses and curiosities through the process of (trial and error) learning by doing. He frowned at the traditional model of education which perceives the child as a miniature adult that could be crammed with books or be compelled outside of his natural gifting thus overlooking the unique tendencies and curiosities of his childhood experience. This paper argues that children live in a fantasy world and that bracketing the guidance of an experienced adult in the upbringing and education of the child is itself illusory. The paper further argues that Rousseau's advocacy for the child's (absolute) freedom to choose and do in an already corrupt and unequal society would endanger the child's chances of success in the future. Using the hermeneutic – phenomenological and evaluative methods, the paper posits that the child cannot be left alone in his world of learning (or discovery) by doing because he lacks the understanding of the complexities of the society which may endanger the development of his innate potentials. The paper concludes that given the social environment of the child with its competitive possibilities, the child would need the guidance of an experienced adult along his natural potentials before regrets may set in at adulthood.

Keywords: Child-centred, curiosity, education, guidance, learning, potentials.

*Aloysius O. Dimgba Ph.D, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

Introduction

Jean Jacques Rousseau (28 June 1712 - 2 July 1778) was born in Calvin, Geneva, of a humble family. He had no stable upbringing because he lost his mother at a very early age and was left with his erratic father who rarely had time for him thus exposing young Rousseau to a very unpleasant childhood experiences. It was those unpleasant childhood experiences that moulded and hunted Rousseau's life.

Rousseau believed that human inequalities and misery are the consequences of modern civilization and traditional education. Thus, Rousseau, informed by his faith in man's natural goodness, advocated for a return to the state of nature to ensure a fundamental reconstruction of a society free of corruption and inequalities. Accordingly, "what was needed was a clean slate, a newly reconstructed society along the line of original innocence, and a fitting system of education to keep it on the straight path (Akinpelu 50). Indeed, Rousseau's recommendation for the complete transformation of the society is a radical break from the subsisting educational method to a new and novel model that will impel the society to allow the child the right of choice in the process of learning so as to develop his innate potentials away from the nefarious influences of the modern society. Emile is the philosophical treatise in which Rousseau sought to trace the natural development of the child from infancy to maturity in order to lay bare the ultimate objective of a truly progressive education that will recognise that the child has his own special needs as a being who exists in his own right (Edwards 221). Rousseau's basic argument is that vice and errors, which are alien to a child's original nature, are introduced by external agencies, so that the work of the tutor must always be directed to counteracting those forces by manipulating pressures that will work with nature and not against it (Safra 941).

Thus, Rousseau's educational theory was a radical response to ensure societal reformation away from the effect of corruption and inequalities. Rousseau believes that a progressive educational model would correct these societal ills through the simple method of allowing the child to develop through his own experience of learning by doing.

However attractive Rousseau's idea of learning by doing may be, the question of age and experience of the child to properly guide his choices in an already corrupt and unequal world deserves due attention. There is also the concern of which human society will allow such an unguided choice for her children. Infact, Rousseau's Emile seems to situate in illusion where children that are naturally imitators are believed to be rational discoverers or pioneers of ideas or ideals. This paper refuses Rousseau's ideals of learning by doing for making children accountable and responsible for their actions and inactions in a supposedly corrupt, evil and deceiving world that Rousseau presented.

The Meaning of Education

The term education connotes the conscious moulding or training of an individual in order to develop skills or competences that will make him/her a cultural member of a society. It means the acquisition and impartation of knowledge and the development of capacities that will enable the individual to live a good life. C.B Okolo perceives it to mean a transmission of knowledge, worthwhile skills, values, beliefs, etc of a culture (16). For Okolo, priority is not on the mode of transmission (whether formal or informal) but on the purpose of education namely; the preservation of culture which means the preservation of a people and their history. R. S. Peters defines education as a “systematic training and instruction geared towards the development of

ability, character, physical and mental powers of the individual, through the careful dissemination of knowledge” (1). For G. F. Kneller, “education is the process by which any society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmits its cultural heritage i.e its accumulated knowledge, values, skills, from one generation to another” (20).

The above definitions appear to be holistic in that they integrate the various types of education namely formal, informal and non-formal education

Formal education is the organised type of education which refers to what we do in schools, colleges, universities. It is the product of Western colonial and (Christian) evangelistic efforts designed to train local people to assist church pastoral and civic administration of the colonies. It sets pattern of work, well defined curriculum and professional teachers, sets examinations and awards certificates. It is structured to effectively weave human morals, physical, mental, cultural, and spiritual competence to a continuous reconstruction and adjustments of the individual’s experience to the society (Azenabor, Philosophy of Education, 5). Omojola Olu informs us that it is “linked with economic development, culture, social and political activities” (178). Omojola’s idea reveals the heavy financial involvement in the form of fees which apparently makes it the reserve of privileged individuals in the society. It also reveals considerable social, economic and political empowerment on individuals which places them to some positions of influence in the society.

Informal education on the other hand is the type of education we have in our traditional societies. It was most effective before the emergence of Western education. Azenabor refers it to as “any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an

individual" (4). In this sense, education is a continuous process we all learn everyday and throughout life, by experience. It helps the individual to acquire necessary experience by socialisation and learning. Its objective has been identified as fundamentalism with the aim to develop the individual's physical, moral and intellectual skills to be able to adapt and actually function in the family and community affairs. Okolo has identified it as certainly covering all sorts of learning by which individuals interact with and consequently survive their environment (17). It has no defined process or method. Thus, it is casual, unorganised and refers to any known attitude or manners which the individuals pick-up without prolonged or sustained efforts on the part of the individual.

Between formal and informal education is non – formal education. This is the type of education provided by private individuals as commercial enterprises. Non – formal education is outside the school system and that way has no fixed time of completion, no time table, no curriculum and in some cases do not have deepened impression for the participants (Omojola 179). It is like cultural and vocational centres like carpentry, weaving, fashion designing, salon, etc where learners acquire certain skills that help them to make a living later.

Rousseau's Concept of Education

Rousseau observed that everything was good in the hands of the creator. However, in the hands of man, everything degenerated by a conscious mutilation that disfigured and deformed everything, including man, away from nature's (original) intention. Rousseau believes that the degeneration arose from human prejudice and social institutions through which our society became submerged with corruption and inequality. For Rousseau, it was imperative to absolve the child from the deformities of human social institutions that has stifled nature out of man. Rousseau is worried on the degree of social malady and deformity that presents man as evil and wicked. As he observed, "in the present condition of things, a man left to himself among others from his birth would be the most deformed among them all" (12). This way, Rousseau's prescription to this societal deformity is to cultivate an improvement for men through education. Rousseau offers a descriptive meaning of education thus: "we are born weak, we need strength; we are born destitute of all things, we need assistance; we are stupid, we need judgement. All that we have not at birth, and that we need when grown up, is given us by education" (12). This means for Rousseau, a kind of reconstruction of experience needed to cope with the inherent problems of life. In this sense, Rousseau categorised the different ways by which education comes to us. They are from nature itself, or from other men, or from

circumstances. From nature, Rousseau tells us that education is the internal development of our faculties and of our organs. From other men, education is the use we are taught to make of this development, and what we learn by our own

experience about things that interest us, is the education of circumstances (12). Rousseau insists that no one of these three different educations is good enough for the child to be well educated. All the three different educations are necessary for the moulding and the development of competences of the child. Thus, Rousseau defines education as that necessary for the perfecting of the child (13).

However, Rousseau is worried that in the event that the three kinds of teachers namely nature, other men and circumstances contradict in their lessons, the child will be badly educated and disoriented. To avert this unhealthy outcome in the life of the child, Rousseau analysed the three kinds of teachers and the education they inculcate. He informs us that out of these three different educations, "that of nature does not depend upon us; that of circumstances depends upon us in

certain respects; and that of men is the only one of which we are really masters" (13). For Rousseau, given that education from other men and that of circumstances has some tendency to human manipulations, they alone cannot be the best possible kind for the child. According to him, that of nature itself, which is outside the control of man must incorporate the other two. Rousseau therefore advocates for a return to state of nature and equality of all men. He insists that education in the "natural order of things", all men being equal, cannot fulfill badly any vocation which depends upon it (13). Rousseau insists therefore that the child should be educated in accordance with the orderings of nature. Education, according to nature, means for Rousseau that "education should be non-social, without passion and prejudice and without authority or examples". Education then is the spontaneous development of the innate competences or tendencies of the child (Azenabor 170). Rousseau also perceives education as signifying nutriment. In this sense, it consists in practice, not in precept. It is meant to help the child live, it commences with the commencement of our life (Rousseau 14). Rousseau strongly believes that a child that is properly educated (educated according nature) will hold his fortune by such tenure that he could never change and cannot be exposed to the inconveniences of another (14). Thus, the child will remain true to himself and seek to pursue the fulfillment and the preservation of his destiny. Indeed, education for Rousseau means the preservation of one's fate. It teaches the child how to live and how to act. Education helps to make the child

conscious of what life truly is (15). This is truly why Rousseau has great distrust in using books in the education of the child because according to him, books only reinforce the artificialities of our social institutions

Rousseau advocates for free education. His idea is that education should be fully sponsored and funded by the State so that it will be easy for every child to access. Rousseau believes the

existentialist's method of teaching of one teacher to one pupil as the best class size. He also believes in the capacity of the family as the best agent of education, if however, the parents are knowledgeable enough and available to do that.

Rousseau's Child-Centred Theory of Education

Rousseau believes on the link between nature and experience and its tremendous effect on the learning and development of the child (29). Following this link, Rousseau recommends that the education of the child should focus mainly on his experience, his interests and his needs. He stresses on the need for a progressive education with each phase of the process being carefully adapted to the child's development needs. For Rousseau, a truly progressive education will recognise that the child as a unique individual has his own special needs as a being who exists in his right. According to him, "nature wants children to be children before being men. Childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling (52). Rousseau accused parents and teachers of "desiring to make a child not a child, but a learned man, have never began early enough to chide, to correct, to reprimand, to flatter, to promise, to instruct, to discourse reason to him" (58). Rousseau instead encourages parents and teachers to:

Do better than this: be reasonable yourself, and do not argue with your pupil, least of all, to make him approve what he dislikes. For if you persist in reasoning about disagreeable things, you make reasoning disagreeable to him, and weaken its influence beforehand in mind as yet unfitted to understand it.... let childhood have its full growth.(58)

Rousseau thus frowns at the idea of cramming a child with books or compel him to do what he does not have any interest or innate potentials to do. Rousseau believes that it is the parents' over zealotry to see their children reach adult stage that make them (parents) to interfere with the natural process of development of children and so distort and corrupt the natural education of their children. Rousseau laments that the error in the education of today is that by speaking to children first of their duties and in every of their rights, we commence at the wrong end, and tell them of what they cannot understand, and what cannot interest them"(63). This

error is the introduction of the educational convention upon the child which according to Rousseau, the child cannot as yet understand what a conventional thing is ... a child's head is crammed with words which from the start have no meaning to him, but which we imagine we have taught him (63). Rousseau continues to lament that;

We make the mistake of calling their attention to considerations by which they are in no wise affected, such as their future interests, the happiness of their coming to manhood, the opinion people will have of them when they are grown up. Such speeches addressed to minds entirely without foresight, are absolutely unmeaning. Now all the studies forced upon these poor unfortunates deal with things like this, utterly foreign to their minds. (80)

Rousseau explains instead that;

The memory of which a child is capable is far from inactive, even without the use of books. All he sees and hears impresses him, and he remembers it. He keeps a mental register of people's sayings and doings. Everything around him is the book from which he is continually but unconsciously enriching his memory against the time his judgment can benefit by it. (84)

Thus, Rousseau demonstrates his belief that children should be allowed to learn by their natural impulses and curiosities through a process of trial and error or learn by doing. Accordingly for Rousseau;

He does not know the meaning of custom or routine. What he did yesterday does not in any wise affect his actions of today. He never follows a rigid formula, or gives way in the least to authority or to example. Everything he does and says is after the natural fashion of his age. (16)

Rousseau cautions that parents and teachers should not expect any "formal speeches or studied manners" from the child. The child instead should always be allowed "the faithful expression of his own ideas, and a conduct arising from his own inclination" (16). Thus for Rousseau, education should be guided by the child's interests born out of his natural inclinations which ideas that set the stage for the contemporary child - centred theory of education. By interests, Rousseau intends that the child's natural tendency is to find out about the world in which he lives given that children are naturally curious and adventurous. Rousseau maintains therefore, that children should be given freedom to learn what they choose to learn. He outlines four maxims to ensure more freedom for children in their choices:

1. Allow them the free use of their natural strength which they cannot misuse

2. We must aid them by supplying everything they lack in intelligence, in strength and physical necessity.
3. In helping them, we must confine ourselves to what is really of use to them, not to impose anything on them.
4. We must understand their language and signs so that we may judge which of their desires spring from nature itself, and which of them from opinion (32-33).

According to Rousseau, these maxims are meant to allow children more personal freedom and less authority; to let them do more for themselves, and exact less from others (33). Rousseau then divided the educational system into four stages according to the ages of children:

Ages 1-5 as Infant Age

Ages 5-12 as Childhood Age

Age 12-15 as Boyhood Age

Ages 15-20 as Adolescent Age

Rousseau went on to recommending curriculum for the different stages. A brief summary of the different stages goes thus:

The first stage: Ages 1-5: Infant Age

This is the stage of physical growth when motor activities like feeling and sensory perception of the child takes place. Rousseau asks that the child should be allowed to do for himself what he can do and not be hindered. The child, for Rousseau, should be allowed to act on his inner impulses and experience the direct result of his behaviour. Rousseau recommends negative education which he believes plays down on the teaching of truth, virtue and morality. His emphasis, instead, is on teachings that protect the child from vices and errors. Rousseau believes that negative education will allow the child to:

1. Move freely in nature through his sensory perception

2. Keep children from all forms of formal education. The child should learn and develop himself in nature. No formal teacher is required.
3. Play as physical activities will help the child to exercise his natural impulses freely (26 - 27).

The second stage: Ages 5 – 12 Childhood Stage

This stage is characterized with the following:

1. Bookish knowledge, cramming, memorization are not allowed (56, 63).
2. No imposition of habits. Natural habits should be allowed in the formation of the child (66).
3. No teaching of direct moral education. Allow the child to learn morals by the natural consequences of his actions (68).

4. No traditional method of learning is allowed. Learning should base on direct observation, experience and learning by doing (63, 66).
5. Education should be based on the child's interest and individuality. No common method or pattern for everyone (58).

The Third Stage: Ages 12 – 15: Boyhood Age

This stage is characterized with:

1. Development of strength and powers
2. Age of (natural) reason and judgement
3. Development of the child through hard work.

Dimgba, Abia Journal of Humanities, Vol 8 NO 2 (2024) page range

4. Manual skill appropriate to his age and sex and suitable to his inclination.
5. Worthy role model (116).

The fourth Stage: Ages 15 – 20: Adolescent Age.

This age is characterized with:

1. Development of sentiments and emotions necessary for building social relationships.
2. Introduction of social education, family relationship.
3. Idea of God, morality, religion can be introduced.
4. Abstract reasoning.
5. Books of interest can be given to him.

Thus for Rousseau, a teacher is secondary in the process of education. A teacher is not an instructor, but a guide, an inspirer or mentor who helps the child to explore his world of learning by doing.

Ontological Evaluation of Rousseau's Child – Centred Education

Ontology is the science or study of Being. It is the study of Being precisely as Being; the study of Being in so far as it is Being. It is not the study of this or that being. It is, instead, the study of what it means to be at all. Its object is pure Being in relation to beings where Being is the foundation and unity of beings, the entities. This way, it is prior to and beyond beings including the being of man (Dimgba 185). The being of man or the ontology of man is the study of what belongs to human beings in general or what it means to be human at all. Its task is the determination of the metaphysical capacity and capability of man which makes all other forms of human activity possible. It is an effort to make man see himself clearly as he is in himself, in his meaning – making possibilities to make man come to terms with himself with a view to assisting him to realize his full potentials through affirmative action, creativity, inventiveness and innovativeness (Unah 43).

Indeed, it is in this understanding to realize the child's full innate potentials that Rousseau's child centred education is meaningful. Rousseau's recognition of the right of the child in the learning process depicts the child's individuality and personhood. The child's personhood expresses his consciousness, his autonomy, his spiritual power of identity and calling himself a self, and distinct from other beings (Iroegbu 78). It means that the child possesses attributes of human personality such as individuality or uniqueness, freedom, morality, rationality and capable of interpersonal relationships (Omoregbe 38). The child's individuality and personhood calls for the recognition and respect for human dignity and pride for the child. Agbakoba's idea

of ontological beneficence agrees with Rousseau's expression of the child's rights as a human being. For Agbakoba, ontological beneficence is a fundamental ontological manner that promotes or elevates the quality of being as such. It includes those things that would make self – realisation possible. It is a "form of beneficence that allows for the existence of conditions that permit or make for self – realisation in a society" (89). Ontological beneficence according to Agbakoba includes freedom, equality and equity, justice, solidarity, charity and other – regarding attitudes generally (89). Indeed for Rousseau, the child should be recognised as a unique individual who has his own special needs as a being who exists in his own right and thus be allowed the exercise of that freedom.

Again, Rousseau's four maxims of freedom which allows the child more personal freedom and less authority cautions parents and teachers of any impositions or what Rousseau described as "studied manners" on the child. Rousseau's insistence is that the child should be allowed the faithful expression of his own ideas and a conduct arising from his own inclinations (116).

In other words for Rousseau, the right to free and fair choice ought to be recognized and allowed for the child as an individual and as a being who exists (17). Rousseau however recognises that rights and responsibilities go together. Accordingly for Rousseau, the child should be allowed to act on his inner impulses and experience the direct results of his choices (68). Rousseau perhaps forgot that absolute freedom does not exist in human societies. Thus, the ideals of freedom for the child appear too dangerous for both the future of the child and peace of the society. Certain mistakes especially at adolescent age can be very costly and can ruin the child's future if allowed unguided. But Rousseau implored the issue of rewards or punishment in the causal determination of the child's behaviour. Rewards and punishment as a consequence of freedom and choice defines the ontological identity of a value laden being. However, such level of consciousness or rational choice cannot be attributed to the child given his age, experience and the complexities of the society. This way, the tendency for errors in choice is obvious thus leading the way to frustration in the future. In this sense, Rousseau's repeated repudiation of attempt to interfere with the child's interests is faulty. Perhaps, Rousseau did not recognise that children at early stage live in a fantasy world and so needs an experienced adult for guidance along the lines of their observed natural tendencies or potentials to avoid delay or frustration in the future. In their nature as children, they are good imitators, dependents, observers and follow instructions. They are not discoverers or pioneers and do not understand the complexities of the society. As Agbakoba puts it, beneficence without reason is inhuman because it takes the form of self – indulgence and nihilistic self – destruction. It is contradictory to the law of reason and morality (90). Indeed, Rousseau needs

to be reminded the words of the Holy Scriptures that “foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him (Prov. 22:15).

Rousseau’s child – centred theory suffers the greatest attack from Ralph Tyler’s subject – centred education. Subject – centred education is a subject or discipline based design. Its primary goal is to facilitate a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the development of expertise in specific disciplines thus ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject (Work of Dinesh Chauhan). Its four core principles of determining objectives, identifying experiences, organising experiences and evaluating effectiveness allows teachers to effectively guide the pupil to understand early enough the direction and interest of the society. It also allows interdisciplinary programmes to promote connections between different subjects and real life contexts. Thus, the child under the guidance of a mentor is exposed to face real life situations unlike Rousseau’s child-centred theory that allows the child to make (unguided) choices. Thus, subject – centred education reveals the greatest weakness of Rousseau’s theory that the child does not have a deep understanding of his natural and human environment which will certainly lead him to errors in choices with its responsibilities some of which may never be redeemed in the child’s life time.

J. A. Akinpelu also disputes Rousseau’s idea that the child is naturally good and would naturally develop along good lines if un-interfered with by adults. For Akinpelu, Rousseau’s idea is a

reaction to the prevalent Christian dogma of the original sin (52). Similarly, Christian dogma, following the story of man’s fall, rejects Rousseau’s insistence that man was originally good and innocent and that the natural direction of the growth of a child is towards goodness. Similarly also, both the behaviourists and the rationalists on different notes argue that the heart of the child at birth is a tabular rasa, not tended towards good or evil but modifications or adjustments would depend on early influences on the child. For the rationalists, the innate capacities of the child have the propensity to turn either to good or evil. Thus, the guidance of an experienced adult is

inevitable to directing the child aright in his learning by doing because it is even naturally observed that children tend to learn bad habits faster than good ones. More so, Rousseau’s idea of allowing the child to ask for something before presenting it to him misrepresents the desire of every good parent to provide the best they can for their children. As Jules Steeg rightly observed, Rousseau’s Emile is appealing, attractive, ideal, upright in counsels, but a large part of it is no longer in accordance with the actual conditions of things because its very plan, its fundamental idea, are outside of the truth (5). Steeg continues to think that:

there is absolutely nothing practicable in his system. It consists in isolating a child from the rest of the world; in creating expressly for him a tutor, who is a phoenix among his kind; in depriving him of father, mother, brothers, sisters, his companions in study; in surrounding him with a perpetual charlatanism, under the pretext of following nature; and in showing him only through the veil of a factitious atmosphere, the society in which he is to live. (6)

Indeed, Rousseau's isolation of the child from his social environment queries the child's intersubjective relations. His idea of learning by doing appears rather too lofty.

Relevance of Rousseau's Educational Theory on Nigeria's Educational System

There is no doubt that Rousseau's educational theory has great influence on the educational system and practice of Nigeria. His child – centred theory of education is presently taking over the colonial legacy of subject or curriculum centred education in Nigeria. Today in Nigeria's educational practice, care is being taken to identify and encourage the child's areas of interest and guide him or her towards attaining success in that area. The practice of (undue) interference and imposition of career on children by parents is very well reducing. Over time, teachers and parents have learnt and appreciated the need to allow the child to learn by doing by way of encouraging the child to exhibit his innate potentials and provide guidance where necessary. Today, it is interesting to hear a child announce his/her choice of studies cum career on the full encouragement of the parent.

Also, the practice of art and craft in Nigeria's Primary and post – Primary schools and the trending emphasis on entrepreneurial skill acquisition in our Universities conforms to Rousseau's idea of vocational training for the child. In short, Rousseau showed himself a believer in the dignity of labour through his encouragement of manual work for the child which idea is properly emphasised in the National Policy of Education of Nigeria (1998) Conference with particular emphasis on Education for self – reliance and self – sufficiency. Rousseau intends that by the cultivation of the spirit of self – reliance and self – sufficiency, the child will be able to establish his individuality and dignity as a person who exists in his own right in his adult age.

Rousseau's educational thought also gives credence to the current Nigeria's educational emphasis on observation and the experimental methods that is informing the trend in the shift to experimental and the technological sciences in our learning institutions. It may be necessary to think that Rousseau's insistence on experience on nature and discovery is the foundation for science and technological growth which Nigeria is currently pursuing.

The principle of discipline imbued with the idea of freedom and responsibilities to choice which Rousseau promoted also influenced Nigeria's educational practice of physical discipline like flogging, manual labour, etc in primary and post – primary schools as correction and as a deterrent from social deviance in children. The concern however is that discipline has both moral and ontological underpinnings and both of them go together because they bother on the suprasensible going by their appeal to faith and reason. Another concern is that Rousseau probably forgot that both morals and virtue have causal, determinant factors to people's behaviour and intersubjective relations and that way can undermine Rousseau's idea of discipline or freedom. Again, Rousseau's insistence that children should bear the full responsibilities of their errors is abnormal and very suspicious to parents.

Another influence of Rousseau on Nigeria's practice in education is the idea of the State sponsor or funding of education. This has continued in Nigeria since Independence till now where students even at the University level at the Federal Universities do not pay tuition fees. This also follows the practice of government regulation and control of educational system and practice in Nigeria in line with Rousseau's prescription.

Rousseau and John Dewey on Child –Centred Education

Dewey's idea of progressive education supports Rousseau's child –centred theory of learning by doing. For Dewey, the child as an inquisitive social actor should actively participate in the learning process. Dewey believes in the continuous social reconstruction of the child's experience given his interaction and the social conditioning of his environment in the learning

process (1). Thus for Dewey, the child discovers his environment through learning by doing following his natural aptitude and interest (Sikandar 194).

Unlike Rousseau, Dewey's ideals of democratic education allow the participation of both the educator and the child in the learning experience of the child. Indeed, for him, the educator as a guide has the responsibility of polishing the learner's experience and social relationships. In fact,

for Dewey, the educator should decide on what is safe and appropriate for the child to learn so as to help encourage problem – solving and critical thinking skills in children. Unlike Rousseau also, the social and cultural environment of the child is important in the learning process of the child. But like Rousseau, Dewey canvasses for respect for each child's individuality and to never pressure any child to conform or follow a recipe (Works of Lorina).

Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's Theories of Child – Centred Education

Pestalozzi's educational theory seeks to develop the powers of the head, the heart and the hands of the child in the learning process. For him, education is not about academic learning but about the development of the whole child. His major contribution to education is the encouragement of group study and participation by ability of each, individual child. He encourages formal teacher training to better equip teachers in the teaching and learning process.

Like Rousseau, Pestalozzi believes that all children deserve an appropriate education regardless of their social or economic background. Like Rousseau also, he rejects rote memorization. He believes in the child experiencing new things by discovering them himself.

Pestalozzi rejects corporal discipline for children unlike Rousseau that encourages the child to suffer the outcome of his actions (Works of De Gree and Jordan).

Rousseau and Maria Montessori's Child – Centred Education

Montessori is a child –centred approach to learning and teaching that believes all children are innately motivated to learn and will do so given the environment and tools they need. Based on three main principles of respect for the child, the prepared environment, and the use of special materials, Montessori believes that children are unique individuals with immense potentials to learn and be busy. For her, children have innate interests to learn and create environment that promotes a child's optimal intellectual, physical, emotional and social development. It involves children natural interests and actualities rather than formal methods. It emphasizes independence and views children as naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supporting and well prepared environment (Works of Maria Montessori).

Like Rousseau, Montessori strongly discourages conventional measures of learning such as grades and tests. Like Rousseau also, Montessori does not believe teachers and care givers have to force, bribe, cajole or trick children into education. Similarly, Montessori's method like Rousseau values independence, autonomy and respect for the child. She also permits some freedom for the child that will enable the child to move around and explore (Works of Stacy Jones).

Unlike Rousseau, Montessori believes in the experience of the teacher to guide the child through the learning process by using materials that fit their specific needs and pace.

Conclusion

Rousseau's thought on the child's education to be according to his innate abilities and interest as a way of ensuring the orderly and the harmonious development of the child is commendable. His understanding of the child as a unique being with unlimited potentials that needs to be harnessed for the child's proper development is also very commendable.

However, Rousseau's idea of freedom and the attribution of autonomy and individuality as a full rational being of choice lack merit in view of the child's inexperienced age and the complexities of the society in which he lives. Rousseau probably forgot that children live in a fantasy world so that allowing them absolute freedom will ruin their future. Rousseau also forgot that the same society he had criticized as corrupt, unequal and evil has the tendency to corrupt and deceive the child if he is not properly guided by an experienced adult.

This way, it is pertinent to protect the destiny and life of the child through "due intervention" on the child's tendencies and choices in the learning process so as to check certain excesses that may ruin the child's destiny. Thus, along the line of the child's interest, he needs guidance that will channel him to his desired destination because as the saying goes: a sheep without a shepherd will naturally be a prey to evil. Help the child to fully realise his potentials.

Works Cited

Agbakoba, Joseph C. A., *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective*, Verlag – Koln: Rudiger Koppe, 2019. Print.

Akinpelu, J. A. *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, London: Macmillan, 1981. Print.

Aliya, Sikandar, John Dewey and His Philosophy of Education *Journal of Educational Development*, vol 2. December, 2015. 191 – 201. Wikipedia; <https://en.m.wikipedia.org> Accessed on May 26, 2024

Azenabor, G. E., "Philosophy of Education" in *Introduction to Philosophy and Logic*, ed. By J. I. Omoregbe, Lagos: Dept. of Philosophy, University of Lagos, 1998. Print.

Azenabor, G. E., "The Nigerian Educational System: Problems and Perspective", in the *Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, University of Lagos, vol. 17 1998/99, ed. By J. I. Unah. Print.

Chauhan, Denish, *Subject – Centred Curriculum Design: A Traditional Path to Educational Excellence*, June 15, 2023. <https://www.linkedin.com>pulse>. Accessed Thursday 27 July, 2024.

De Gree, Adam. And Jordan, Adam., "Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi Life, Theory and Quotes". <https://study.com>, 21 November 2023. Accessed on May 28, 2024.

Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, New York: Capricorn Books, 1934. Print.

Dimgba, Aloysius O. "Ontological Evaluation of the Impact of Political Godfatherism in Politics in Igboland" in Gregory University Uturu Journal of Humanities, vol. 3. No. 1 April 2024, 181 – 193. Print.

Edwards, Paul, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 7, ed. New York: Macmillan, 1967. Print.

Jones, Stacy. "What is Montessori Theory", <https://montessorifortoday.com>, Sept. 12, 2022. Accessed on May 26, 2024.

Kneller, G. F. *Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, London: John Willy and Sons. 1964. Print.

Lorina, "John Dewey's Theory", <https://aussiechildcare.com.au>. May 12, 2022. Accessed 13 March, 2024.

Montessori, Maria. "Montessori Principles of Education". <https://montessoriacademy.om.au>. Accessed on May 26, 2024 .

National Policy on Education 3rd ed. Lagos: NERDC Press 1998.

Okolo, C. B., *Philosophy of Education and Education of Philosophy*, Enugu: SNAAP Press, 1989. Print.

Omojola, Immaculata Olu, "Education for Peace – Building in Nigeria" in Igwebuike, *An African Journal Arts and Humanities*, vol. 6. No. 5, 2020.

Peters, R. S., *Philosophy of Education*, London: Oxford Up., 1980. Print.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Emile*. trans. By Eleanor Worthington, Boston: Heath & Co, 1986. Print.

Safra, Jacob E., *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 26, ed. Print

Steeg, Jules. "Introduction" in *Emile*, trans. Eleanor Worthington, Boston: Health 7 Co., 1986. Print.

Unah, J. I. *On Being: Discourse on the Ontology of Man*, Lagos: Fadec, 2002. Print.