Possibilities of "Education" based on (through/aimed at) the Concept of "Relationship"

: Inquiry in terms of "Language", "Care" and "Excellence"

Hiromi OZAKI
Toyo Eiwa University

Abstract

This study aims to explore the ramifications of ongoing debates concerning the essence of education and the shift towards a learner-centric approach, using the concept of "relationship" as a guiding framework. It acknowledges the transformative discussions within philosophy of education since the 1990s, challenging conventional notions of education and advocating for a reevaluation rather than outright dismissal. In this paper, I delve into the idea of education as a process of human transformation, questioning traditional views on the educated person as the ultimate goal. It critically examines "language", "care", and "excellence" as key dimensions through which education can be reimagined. "Language" is seen not only as a tool for communication but also as a vehicle for shaping educational dynamics and discourse. "Care" is highlighted as a crucial aspect, urging a reconsideration of dichotomies such as reason-emotion and universal-individual within educational evaluation. Similarly, the concept of "excellence" is reconceptualized to emphasize empathy, understanding, and collaborative knowledge-building rather than solely measurable achievements. This paper concludes by advocating for productive discourse within educational philosophy to foster a more holistic and inclusive understanding of education as a means of human growth and societal advancement.

Key words: Educational aims, Relationship, Theory of "Care", "Excellence" in education

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the implications of the debate on the meanings of education and teaching-learning for human beings, using "relationship" as

Correspondence:
Hiromi OZAKI, Toyo Eiwa University. Email: ozaki.h@toyoeiwa.ac.jp

a perspective to restructure education. It is widely acknowledged that since the 1990s, discussions on the philosophy of education have challenged the prevailing framework of modern education. These discussions have generated discourses that question the very essence of education and the shift from teaching to learning. However, these debates do not advocate the elimination of education or teaching; instead, they propose a rethinking of our understanding of these concepts. Consequently, this paper aims to raise questions from the perspectives of language, care, and excellence, rooted in relationships, to re-envision education (teaching-learning) within the realm of educational philosophy.

2. The concept of education as a process and means of transformation from human to human

(1) What does "being educated" signify for a human?

As underscored in the primary objective of this symposium, Immanuel Kant famously stated, "Man is the only creature who must be educated." This assertion initially suggests a distinct difference between teaching-learning for humans and that for non-humans. For instance, it is commonly known that parents of certain animal species teach their offspring how to hunt. Moreover, it has been observed that an individual within a group of animals may begin to wash their food in seawater, a behavior that is then adopted by other members of the group. We could draw from Kant's discourse above the assumption (or wish or hope) that *there is some essential difference between* the actions and phenomena in these non-human cases that seem to be similar to "teaching" and "learning" and the "teaching-learning" in human "education."

Here, let us revisit the critiques, predominantly by British educational philosopher R.S. Peters in the 1960s, concerning the concept of the "educated person" and the portrayal of the human being as an ultimate goal inherent in education. Peters asserted, "Education, then, can have no ends beyond itself. Its value derives from principles and standards implicit in it" [1]. One notable critique of Peters' view, which posits the purpose of education as intrinsic to education itself, comes from Japanese educational philosopher, Akio Miyadera. He argued that responding to the demand for "justification of the purpose of education" and explaining "why this purpose of education is correct for society as a

---

[1] Peters, R. S., 1965, "Education as Initiation", in: R. D. Archambault (ed.) *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp.87-111. In the original work, Peters uses the term "educated man," but this paper uses the term "educated person" to refer to the concept.

Possibilities of "Education" based on (through/aimed at) the Concept of "Relationship"
: Inquiry in terms of "Language", "Care" and "Excellence"

39

whole" is challenging in a context of value pluralism (Miyadera, 2017, pp.189-190). In recent years, it has also been pointed out that "the justification theory of educational purpose distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic purposes of education, but the author's personal view may have influenced this distinction" and "the ideological neutrality of the research method was called into question" (Yamaguchi, 2023, p. 403). These points critique not only Peters and the concept of the "educated person" but also challenge the broader theories of educational purpose and analytical philosophy of education that attempt to define an ideal human image as the goal of education or to view such a goal as inherent in education[2].

On the other hand, Miyadera highlights that Peters defined educational purpose as intrinsic to education partly due to the societal context of the 1960s in the United Kingdom, marked by an educational explosion (Miyadera, 1997). This period saw demands from political, economic, national defense, and other areas increasingly directed towards education, as Miyadera notes. This reflected a critical concern that education might become merely an instrument of the state, tasked with training or selecting human resources needed by sectors such as politics, economy, and national defense. In this regard, Peters' notion of the educated person, or educational purpose, effectively illustrated the role of education and its purposes within society, stemming from calls for educational autonomy.

Considering this background, we must acknowledge a certain importance of examining this discussion in light of the issues inherent in the concept of an "educated person." Because not questioning the concept of the "educated person" rather implicitly internalizes it and runs the risk of fixing a particular view and increasing its influence. For instance, American educational philosopher Jane Roland Martin's critique of Peters' concept is significant because it demonstrates how education has reclassified human qualities into those that are valued and those that are unvalued through the lens of the "educated person" concept (Martin, 1981, 1992, 2002). Her criticism highlights the impact of defining a specific human image—including abilities, qualities, character, and behavior—as the goal of education, which is the condition for being considered educated. Moreover, the necessary discussion should not revolve around merely replacing or adding to the content that serves as the goal but should focus on the method of setting

---

[2] Furthermore, in the same paper, it is pointed out that "the research philosophy and explicit argumentation style of analytical philosophy of education" have been inherited by later philosophy of education, which accepted Wittgenstein and others (Yamaguchi, 2023, p. 403). In recent years, arguments that reconsider the analytical philosophy of education based on developments in linguistic and epistemological theory can also be found (Cf. Misawa & Watanabe, 2023).

these goals and redefining the roles and positioning of objectives within educational discourse.

Why do we strive to reconstruct education and educational objectives instead of abandoning them? It is because, in the current circumstances, failing to question preserves the detrimental effects, and we recognize that the activity of education itself holds the potential to significantly impact contemporary society and human beings, whether we ask these questions or not.

(2) Education as a process and method—a philosophical inquiry

Kant's discourse above suggests "education" as the enterprise by which "human beings," as mere organisms in biological classification, are transformed into "human beings." If we posit that individuals who have not received education are not fully "human being" or cannot become "human being," we must then address the fundamental question of what is "human being"? However, from the perspective of the philosophy of education as a pedagogical field, this inquiry primarily explores how to become "human being," what is essential, and what occurs during this transformation. This suggests that the question "what is education?" and the question "how to educate?" are inseparable in the discourse on education.

Minoru Murai, a Japanese educationalist, characterized education both as a result-image model and a process-image model, illustrating the transformation through education in two distinct manners.

> One is to think of the "goodness" of that "good person" in terms of the way in which the *process* of human development takes place, and the other, by contrast, is to think of the way in which the *result* of development takes place. ...... The one belonging to the former is named process-oriented and the one belonging to the latter is named result-oriented, and all educational ideas can be divided into those belonging to the former and those belonging to the latter as types. (Murai, 1976, p.172)

Based on Murai, the result-image model posits a particular human image, skill, or state as the outcome of education, and describes education as a process advancing toward that image. The process model portrays education as a series of activities where education itself is the goal, with each objective being progressively achieved through the completion of preceding objectives. According to Murai, educational models inspired by Plato and Rousseau align with the former, while those influenced by the progressive education approaches of Dewey and others align with the latter. It is crucial to reiterate

here that portraying education shapes both the objectives and methods of education.

It is entirely possible that the frameworks of education depicted by Peters and Murai, as discussed in this section, could become subjects of critique or remain unaddressed, representing rigid structures within modern education. Regardless of whether one endorses, however, critiques, or distances oneself from education, it is vital to recognize that these debates are built upon a foundation of discourse that articulates "education". Because this discussion is an examination of the language of education that discusses "education," it also seeks an effort to create a new "education." In light of the previously mentioned concept of the "educated person" as an objective of education, our aim is not solely to question the validity of this concept as an educational goal. Instead, we explore how the assumption of the "educated person" concept as an implicit educational objective shape and influences the practice of education, seeking methods to address these influences.

3. Language, care, and excellence as perspectives for examining education

(1) Multi-layered views of language in the context of education

How can the concept of "education", defined both as the separation of the human from the non-human and as an activity that transforms one into a "human being," be reconstructed following critiques of modern education? The primary question concerns language within the context of education. It is well understood that human activities are shaped by the language used, and these activities can also be examined and refined. The diversity of linguistic activities, recognized as a characteristic of human beings, has been explored in fields such as analytical philosophy, linguistic theory, epistemology, and symbolism, focusing particularly on the language of education. This exploration has presented possibilities for a language that embraces situational contexts and physicality as well as figurative and expressive language, in contrast to universal descriptive language. Such a reassessment of language in education not only highlights that the act of teaching extends beyond merely transmitting propositions like "A is B" or giving uniform instructions such as "make A to B." Rather, it also prompts further consideration of the teaching-learning image based on this linguistic perspective.

What is noteworthy here is the accumulation of debates on how language itself should be viewed within the context of education. For instance, Izrael Schaeffler, an American philosopher of education, categorized definitions of certain statements into

scientific definitions, which are somewhat detached from context, and general definitions, which vary depending on the context[3]. He posited that educational statements typically fall into the latter category. Schaeffler further distinguished among definitions in educational discourse: (1) "stipulative definitions", which aim to "exhibits some term to be defined and gives notice that it is to be taken as equivalent to some other exhibited term, or description, within a particular context," (2) "Descriptive definitions", which "explain terms by giving an account of their prior usage," and (3) "Programmatic definitions," which "is acting as an expression of a practical program" (Sheffler, 1960, pp.13-19). This classification is not merely about how language is expressed but about its contextual role. While Schaeffler's categories, if considered universally applicable, clearly have limitations, they are useful as an example of a method to describe the concept of "education." This approach is important because it emphasizes the search for a vocabulary that can be shared at a certain level in order to increase the consistency of discussion when examining the concept of "education" from the perspective of the philosophy of education.

Additionally, Kumiko Ikuta, Japanese educational philosopher, drawing on studies of analytical philosophy of education, has analyzed "knowing" and "knowledge" in "education," classifying the language of traditional arts and craftsmanship into three types based on the process of work transmission as a case study for verification:

i. Language that serves as an "action-directed language" through metaphorical expression of sense.

ii. Language that serves to "lead" the learner to have a certain physical sensation.

iii. Language in which the teacher "confronts" the learner with the state (achievement) that he/she has reached, and "invites" the learner to explore the sense of this achievement that he/she has attained. (Ikuta, 2011, pp.28-29)

In this context, language in education serves a role beyond merely transmitting information. Consequently, it is expected that learners will progress from simply acquiring a skill as a "task" to mastering a skill as an "achievement."

Considering the characteristics of language as outlined by Schaeffler and Ikuta, it represents a unique form of communication for human beings, closely tied to or even

---

[3] Schaeffler also noted that "definitions in science are all, in an important sense, technical in purport and call for special knowledge and the use of special theoretical criteria in their evaluation. In scientific communication, definitions are presented and interpreted accordingly by professional members of the scientific community" (Sheffler, *Ibid.*, pp.12-13), and he points out a certain context-dependence.

Possibilities of "Education" based on (through/aimed at) the Concept of "Relationship"
: Inquiry in terms of "Language", "Care" and "Excellence"

43

inseparable from the context of teaching-learning. This distinct language, acquired through engagement in the teaching-learning process, differs from the mother tongue learned through biological parent-child interactions, or from language learned systematically through grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, analyzing the nature of language in educational contexts—such as parent-child interactions at home, teacher-student interactions at school, and supervisor-subordinate guidance at work—is crucial. This analysis helps define the unique role of language in shaping and being shaped by the teaching-learning dynamics that occur in these settings[4].

(2) Care and excellence as questions

The second question is posed from the perspective of "care." Central to this question is a biased evaluation system embedded in the dichotomies of reason-emotion, public-private, and universal-individual, which prompts a reconsideration of these dichotomies themselves. Specifically, it attempts to redefine the concepts of reason, public, and universal from the perspective of care, urging the recognition of the value of emotional, private, and individual aspects of care. The essential inquiry here is not *whether* care *should be* taught in public education, but rather *how* public education *can be* enhanced from the perspective of care.

The third question pertains to excellence. Modern education has traditionally visualized the excellence of human beings as quantifiable and assessable through measurable objectives. While this evaluative criterion shares common biases with the question of "care," it does not lead to a rejection of evaluating excellence in "education." Instead, it suggests an attempt to reconceptualize excellence as a goal and method within "education," emphasizing shared empathy and understanding within specific relationships and contexts. This approach envisions excellence as both a target for and a means by which education of human beings can be pursued.

For example, in her analysis of ethics of care, Carol Gilligan emphasized an understanding of "the dynamics of relationships" as central to moral development in humans (Gilligan, 1986). This suggests that "care" is not simply an attribute to be contrasted with "reason" or "autonomy," but one of the perspectives from which the concepts of "reason" and "autonomy" can be reconstructed[5]. In essence, it challenges the

---

[4] For example, the accumulation of research on teachers' language activities is not simply a collection of cases of "Just say 'A' in that situation" but also includes the educational perspective, educational relationships, and the nature of educational methods in those situations (Cf. Himeno.K & Ikuta.T, 2019).

[5] In recent years, following a discussion that has pitted "justice" against "care" an attempt has been made to integrate the two. If based on the said discussion, from the discussion of "care" as opposed to (as a complement or counter-

traditional view of excellence sought through education, prompting a reassessment of what constitutes the state of excellence.

One illustration of this is in the concept of "collaborative knowledge." Traditionally, knowledge within the framework of educational purpose theory has been conceptualized as stemming from "the individual as a person." However, in recent years, there has been a shift towards viewing knowledge from the perspective of collaboration, togetherness, and joint effort. For instance, Japanese educationalist Kayo Matsushita emphasizes the importance of acquiring the ability to engage in "dialogical argumentation" in the "learning" envisioned by the curriculum(Matsushita, 2021, p.3). Furthermore, Japanese educationalist Masahiro Nasu, in his discussion on "Japanese-style education in the Reiwa Era" (Central Council for Education, 2021), highlights that "personalized optimal learning," which refers to independent learning, and "collaborative learning," which entails mutual learning among peers, are in a "complementary and mutually facilitating relationship" (Nasu, 2021, pp. 168-169). Given the insights from Matsushita and Nasu, it becomes evident that dialogue and collaboration are integral to education, serving both as skills to be acquired and methods to be implemented. Nasu also notes that "every child is a competent learner" (*Ibid*., p. 109), but the progression of the argument here shifts from a child-centered perspective to one where learning collaboratively shapes the view of children as "competent learners." This underscores that the perception of a child as a "competent learner" emerges from engaging in "collaborative learning." This approach suggests that the concept of "education" discussed at the outset of this paper not only directs the purpose and methods of education but also influences our understanding of "children" themselves. From a different perspective, the concept of "children" also has aspects that are influenced by the characteristics of the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.

The preceding questions on language, care, and excellence initially focused on the relationships between human beings (teachers) and human beings (learners and the taught) within the teaching-learning process. Additionally, they prompt us to consider the relationship between "human beings" and the subjects of teaching-learning (the content being taught). In the framework of modern education, universal and neutral "language" seeks to the transparent transmission of "the content being taught." However, transparency here implies that the teacher's intentions do not influence the content, but

---

concept to) the concepts of "justice" and "fairness" in Western philosophy, we have experienced a fluctuation in the boundary line between "justice" and "fairness" and "care" and "we," and the possibility (necessity) of fusion is being considered (Cf. Shinagawa, 2007, Tokunaga, 2020).

Possibilities of "Education" based on (through/aimed at) the Concept of "Relationship"
: Inquiry in terms of "Language", "Care" and "Excellence"

45

can this truly be more than merely transferring and recording information? It is crucial to recognize that the teacher's intentionality is not merely directive with a defined intent or system. Lave & Wenger, in their "Legitimate Peripheral Participation" (1991), argue that the learning of beginning learners is not automatic, but is led by the practices of experienced learners in the community in which they are participating. In addition to this, and in light of Ikuta's discussion of "inviting" language, the concept of the teacher's "intentionality to teach" itself is also being examined in a multilayered way.

In light of the above, the role of the teacher, when viewing a child as a "competent learner" or a participant in collaboration, invites renewed scrutiny. It becomes necessary to reassess the role of the teacher not only as a specialist in teaching but also as an agent in various aspects of human social life. This includes roles in forming home or parental relationships that extend beyond biological kinship. Such a reevaluation prompts a reconsideration of the learner-teacher dynamic and the teachable objects[6]. Here, we could find the potential to discuss education from the perspective of relationships—viewing education as an activity that both builds and is built through relationships. This approach can provide new ways of expressing and narrating "those who teach," "those who are taught (those who learn)," and "things that are taught," thereby presenting "education" and, by extension, "human beings" as more attractive entities.

4. Conclusion: questions leading to productive discourse through critical discourse

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the reevaluation of the concept of "human beings" and "education," based on the objectivity of being educated, which is the primary aim of this research, is progressing within the discourse of philosophy of education (pedagogy). Moreover, this reevaluation suggests that the discourse stating "it is *not education, it is ......,*" emanating not only from pedagogy but also from disciplines beyond it does not merely highlight the limitations of "education" but provides valuable insights for further enhancing the concept of education. Japanese Education scholar Akira Geshi, referring to the term education as "second-rate fake academia" (Geshi, 2019), addresses the critique of modern education within the trends of educational philosophy

---

[6] For example, in more recent research on the philosophy of education, we can find such possibilities in the questioning of the "autonomy" aimed for in "education" and the examination of the role of the "community" in the discussion of the professionalism of teachers (Cf. Miyagawa, 2022, Suzuki, 2018).

and educational thought, posing the question, "What comes after the criticism?" In response to this, this paper would like to reply that through the exploration of "education" in the philosophy of education, a productive discourse can emerge that proposes a more attractive concept of "education" and the way it should be practiced. This approach aims to depict "human being" as a more appealing entity, which is expressed through "education" from "human beings", and also seeks to reassess "humanness" itself. How can education based on relationship foster "human beings" capable of innovation while embracing heterogeneous others, and how can knowledge be expanded in this context? These are questions that we aim to explore further in future research and dialogue.

References

Central Council for Education, 2021, "Reiwa no Nihon-gata gakko kyoiku no kochiku wo mezashi te (Toward the Construction of a Japanese-Style School Education in the Reiwa Era)".

Dewey, J., 1916, "Democracy and Education" Boydston, J. (ed.), *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976–1983.

Geshi, A., 2019, "Kyoiku-tetsugaku: Hihan no ato ni nani ga kuru noka? (Philosophy of Education: What comes after the criticism?)" in *Kyoiku-gaku Nenpo 11: Kyoikugaku no new chapter (Annual Review of Education 11, New Chapters in Educational Research)*, Seori Shobo. pp.7-35.

Gilligan, C., 1982, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Himeno, K. & Ikuta, T., 2019, *Kyoshi no Waza wo Kagaku suru (The Science of Teachers' 'Waza')*, Tokyo: Ikkei shobo.

Ikuta, K., 2011 "'Waza' no densho ha nani wo mezasu noka (What does the transmission of the 'Waza' aim to be?)" in Ikuta, K. & Kitamura, K. (ed.), *Waza Gengo (Language of 'Waza')*, Tokyo: Keio University Press, pp.3–31.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E., 1991, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Martin, Jane Roland,
   -1981 "The Ideal of the Educated Person", *Educational Theory*, 31(2), pp.97-109, Illinois: The University of Illinois.
   -1987 *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal* of *the Educated Woman*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

-1992 *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

-2002 *Cultural Misueducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*, New York: Teachers College Press.

-2018 *School Was Our Life: Remembering Progressive Education*, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Matsushita, K., 2021, *Taiwagata-ronsho ni yoru Manabi no Dezain (Designing Learning through dialogical argumentation)*, Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.

Mayeroff, M., 1971, *On Caring*, New York: Harper & Row.

Misawa, K. and Watanabe, F., 2023, "P.H.Hurst no kyoiku tetsugaku (P. H. Hurst's Philosophy of Education)," *Tetsugaku (Philosophy)*, vol.150, pp.59-84, Mita Tetsugakukai.

Miyagawa, Y., 2022, *Jiritsu wo mezasu Kyoiku toha nani ka (What is Education for Autonomy)*, Kanagawa: Shumpusha Publishing.

Miyadera, A.,

-1997, *Gendai Igirisu kyoiku tetsugaku no tenkai (The Development of Contemporary British Philosophy of Education)*, Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.

-2017, "Kyoiku mokuteki (The Purpose of Education)," in History of Educational Thought Society (ed.), *Kyoiku Shiso Jiten, Zoho kaitei ban (Encyclopedia of Educational Thought, Increased and Revised edition),* Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, pp.187-191.

Murai, M., 1976, *Kyoiku-gaku Nyumon, Jokan (An Introduction to Pedagogy, vol.1)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

Noddings, N.,

-1984, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, California: University of California Press.

-2002, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy*, California: University of California Press.

Ozaki, H., 2021, "'Kyoiku-mokuteki' wo 'Kankei-sei' kara tou koto no Igi (Why Should We Discuss 'Aims of Education' From the Standpoint of 'Relationship'?)," *Forum on Modern Education*, vol. 30, pp. 1-12, History of Educational Thought Society.

Peters, R. S., 1966, *Ethics and Education*, London: Allen &Unwin.

Schaeffler, I., 1960, *The Language* of *Education,* Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Shinagawa T., 2007, *Seigi to sakai wo sessuru mono (Justice and Bordering Things)*, Kyoto: Nakanishiya Publishing.

Suzuki, Y., 2018, *Kyoshi no "Senmon-ka kyodotai" no Keisei to Tenkai (The Formation*

and Development of the "Professional Community" of Teachers), Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.

Tokunaga, T., 2021, *Seigi to Kea no gendai tetsugaku (Contemporary Philosophy of Justice and Care)*, Kyoto: Koyo Shobo.

Yamaguchi H., 2023, "Peters (Peters)," in Philosophy of Education Society (ed.), *Kyoiku-tetsugaku jiten (Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education)*, Tokyo: Maruzen Publishing, pp.402-403.