

Should educated people have more authority than others in society?

Yue Zhu

Keystone Academy, Beijing 101318, China

Abstract: *The outstanding figures nowadays are mainly people who have received a high quality of education that led them to their leadership. Hannah Arendt and Jean Jacques Rousseau are two philosophers who have brought up their perspectives on the relationship between education and authority. Furthermore, due to the qualities and standards of people's living conditions, it is significant to study from our past and innovate for our future. Regarding Hobbes, we need education to bring justice, law, and order to society. Therefore, education provides people the authority within their community to lead, govern, and innovate.*

Keywords: *Education, authority, society, Hannah Arendt, Jean Jacques Rousseau*

1. Introduction

Education is the basic condition for stepping into society, since only by acquiring basic knowledge will you survive the invisible battles that take place in social life. Education is similar to “tradition”, as Hannah Arendt has argued. It teaches us about the past and guides us into our future. Moreover, it is like another dimension, “the dimension of depth in human existence” (Arendt). Nowadays, people from the middle and upper social classes enjoy the enrichment of education, while poorer families seeking opportunities to provide the best learning for their children. It seems evident that everyone is trying to be educated. The reason why everyone is fighting for the opportunity to be educated is that education promotes social mobility, economic development, and innovation. Since these benefits of education help to further the development of societies, I will suggest that educated people should have more authority than others.

Authority is the power to control or lead. In this case, what makes people put their trust in their leaders? The answer is their educational background. Education is the basic and the starting point before making any further achievements. Moreover, when having the basic knowledge, others will trust you, since you have the understanding and know-how to lead.

2. Methodology

Education is being provided to students, while the ones who teach have more wisdom and better understandings of the past. Correspondingly, learning from the past helps learners to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors. For example, the fables adults usually tell kids are typical ways to educate children in moral ideas that have developed in the past. In this case, no matter what position you have in society, studies of the past can always bring benefits. Furthermore, every country has its history. China dates back to 5000 years ago. In the past few hundreds and thousands of years, there are numerous lessons that we can still learn from. Learning from the past, however, is only the first step towards acquiring authority. Other aspects are also needed in order to gain true authority.

Innovation is another key benefit promoted by education that can give some people authority. Education mediates between the old and the new (Arendt). In this case, people who learn from the past can gain experience and make extensions and improvements based on their predecessors' works. For example, the recently discovered 5G by Huawei was an innovative development made by intelligence. As the fastest Internet in the world, 5G is now dominating all technology companies, and all other countries or companies that want to use 5G need to pay Huawei. This has given Huawei a high degree of authority and the ability to get hold of other technology companies. 5G itself has improved people's daily use technologies, such as computers and phones. At the same time, everyone is looking forward to this innovation. As demonstrated, Huawei and China being the company and country that developed 5G now

have the authority to be the leader in this field.

As for teachers who possess and convey knowledge, they are playing the role of authorities. Teachers need to have authority because they are transmitters and excavators. As transmitters, they are the ones who possess the knowledge, which gives them authority over students, who learn the knowledge from teachers. As excavators, teachers also “dig deep” into students’ potentials and bring out their best sides. In this case, the authority that teachers have is what students need in order to benefit themselves in the future. Rousseau, in his *Emile*, gives a good example. In school, where teachers are figures of education, who have the authority and are passing the knowledge to students (Bertram). Furthermore, professors in colleges who usually have more education would have more authority compared to primary school teachers. As demonstrated, the ones who have more knowledge have more authority than the others who are still learning.

Education is what teaches us the content of the law and cultural norms. Furthermore, as Hannah Arendt has mentioned in her philosophical thinking, tradition is the experience that has been summarized from the past. These include the basic norms and laws that everyone has to follow within society. Children at the age when they are able to communicate through language start to learn from their parents the basic respect they need to show to their elders. Especially in China, the five shared values (compassion, respect, wisdom, justice, and honesty) proposed by Confucius are widely spread in private, public, and international schools. The five shared values have played an important role in these schools as the moral rules, that students need to follow. In this scenario, everyone understands the basic social norms that they need to follow in order to have a society in line.

Without education that separates people into different social statuses, the world would be in the state of nature as Rousseau argued, where everyone follows what nature prepared for humans. There won’t be any war between people since everyone is isolated, but also no innovation, since innovations depend on interactions and communication between people. But once people do start to interact, they also start competing with each other. This can lead to chaos, as Hobbes argues since people fight for their advantage and have no understanding of what laws can bring them, namely peace. In this case, only law can control and frighten civilians to seek order and avoid war. Therefore, education is essential for society. Moreover, it is what gives people the power to compel others to follow social norms.

3. Results and discussion

On the contrary, not everyone in society has an equal opportunity to be educated. Families living in poverty will not have as much chance to gain social authority compared to the ones who are born with a silver spoon in their mouths. In this case, the ones who have authority will always be people at the top of the social hierarchy, who have the opportunity to receive a higher quality of education. For example, students living in cities have an advantage if they are affluent and have financial support for their education, whereas students living in rural villages might not even have the opportunity to go to school. It is unfair for the ones who don’t even have the chance to be educated, which means they don’t even get to “see” authority.

Nonetheless, education is the only pathway to overcome poverty. It can’t be denied that there will be unfairness due to economic gaps, but education is the only key to social mobility. Along with the knowledge you gain, people will recognize you as a leader, thinking that you have the ability to exercise authority. For example, leaders, CEOs, or presidents nowadays are all graduates from colleges. As demonstrated, the ones who have the most authority are those who received a high-quality education.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the authority will be in the hands of the ones who are more educated than others within the society in order to maintain social order and at the same time develop innovations. It is being encouraged that everyone should take in knowledge to enrich themselves and make contributions to society. Therefore, the more knowledge you own, the more authority you might gain, but not the opposite. To an extent, people still need to consider how authority is being used and is their hearts good or evil. This will directly affect the result of giving that authority.

References

[1] Bertram, Christopher, "Jean Jacques Rousseau", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Winter 2020

[2] <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/rousseau/>.

[3] Hannah Arendt, "On Authority", *Edition 1*, 25 January 2005