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The Relationship between Imagination, Socialization, and Education

Presentation

A discovery of a viable relationship between imagination and knowledge will lead to the incorporation of imagination in the socialization and education of children. Both Alison Gopnik and Amy Chua have in their works given substantial information to support this new discovery. Many scientists and scholars have always treated imagination and knowledge as different and even opposite aspects but a closer look into them shows that they are so much related that they had been thought to oppose each other. Knowledge could turn out to be a collection of illustrations and facts that will not help much if it is not integrated with imagination. This makes imagination a very important component of the socialization and education processes.

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Knowledge has been found to be the force that strengthens imagination and makes it much shaper. “In fact, knowledge is actually what gives imagination its power, what makes creativity possible” (Gopnik 181). The human mind, including the children’s, is not like a computer which only receives commands to act and cannot do anything else. Instead it has the ability to manipulate knowledge and imagine widely to create even illusion of things that do not exist in reality. Knowledge of things or occurrences gives the mind the basis to think beyond them and create new things out of it. Once a child realizes that they can grasp knowledge, it builds the confidence and his/her imagination is triggered to push them into being more knowledgable. “Once a child starts

to excel at something – whether it’s math, piano, pitching or ballet – he or she gets praise, admiration and satisfaction. This builds confidence and makes the once not-fun activity fun” (Chua 2). Children need to be assured that they can grasp knowledge and that will work miracles in them. They will develop much confidence in themselves and use their imaginative activities to articulate knowledge into being better in their learning. This clearly shows that knowledge needs to be carefully blended with imagination and it will yield more knowledge.

Essay

The important connection between imagination and knowledge and how relevant it is to the development and learning process in children validates imagination as an important component in child socialization and education. Amy Chua’s “Why Chinese Mothers are Superior” gives practical examples on how parents influence children’s learning through what they make imagine and believe. Alison Gopnik’s “Possible Worlds: Why Do Children Pretend?” on the other hand gives insights from scientific research on children and their mental development in terms of imagination and cognitive abilities. Though with different approaches, both authors bring out important aspects about the education and socialization. These insights are all geared towards helping the adults give the children better training as they grow, through a better understanding of children’s abilities as discovered in professional studies. They bring out imagination as a crucial mental ability to be used in the socialization and education of children.

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Humans develop great imagination abilities right from when they are toddlers that enable them to make decisions, judgment, and even develop emotions. With this imagination abilities children are able to think counterfactually. The learning process starts with the ability of using counterfactual thinking, an ability that determines among others, behavior, judging, and

developing feelings. Studies have shown that counterfactual abilities develop very early, and as an example, “anthropologists agree that using tools and making plans, both abilities that depend on anticipating future possibilities ... and we can see these abilities emerging even in babies who can’t talk yet” (Gopnik 167). Observation of very young children reveals that they are able to look at situations and things like adults. They can be able to learn when they look at things that are new to them and when they are faced with challenges or when they see things that are of interest to them, they try to manipulate the little knowledge they have about them and come out with solutions.

The only slight difference that may be seen between the way they react and how adults do is, they use the trial and error method to deal with some situations owing to the little knowledge they have about those situations (Chua 8). As they grow up, their abilities of making predictive and futuristic decisions gets better and better and they move away from the trial and error method of thinking owing to the increase in the knowledge they have on things and experiences (Chua 4-5). By so doing, children ought to be given a chance to make important decisions as far as their education and their social life is concerned. Parents should not force them into doing some things and not doing others because they think they are not mature enough to make sound decisions but instead they should support them in what they are interested in doing.

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While highlighting how Western parents handle their children, Chua agrees with this idea of respecting the children’s ability to decide. She highlights that “Western parents try to respect their children’s individuality, encourage them to pursue their true passions, supporting their choices, and providing positive reinforcement and a nurturing environment” (Chua 4). This gives the children an opportunity to use their counterfactual abilities, just as Gopnik asserts, to

independently make decisions not out of being forced by their superiors but because they have been able to articulate the knowledge they have and intelligently take the appropriate action. Children's socialization skills and education will much easily be achieved out of them exercising their counterfactual thinking abilities.

The imagination of the children enables them to distinguish between the real and the imaginary. Most times when people look at children playing, they tend to imagine that they are not aware that they are pretending and so they are stuck in the imaginary world. This is of course an outright misconception of the imaginative abilities of the children. "As soon as babies can talk they immediately talk about the possible as well as the real" (Gopnik 169). Children are always well aware of what they are doing even when they are in the deepest points of their imagination. When they get involved in games and try to create totally imaginary situations, they are very well aware of it and they can clearly distinguish it from what the reality is. This is why when the children are pretending to cook or to be in possession of imaginary food they never eat it as food and when they pretend to drive vehicles by pushing toy cars or any other things around, they are very aware that these things are just imaginary. This is an indicator that children's reasoning abilities are developed at a very tender age and they only need the right orientation to do marvelous things.

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Children should not be left to think that they cannot be able to do certain things maybe because their abilities as individuals are not sufficient or because they view themselves as too young. "But as a parent, one of the worst things you can do for your child's self-esteem is to let them give up" (Chua 4). The children should not be given a chance to view themselves as losers. Instead they should be encouraged and pushed to do better and better because the ability to do more lies in them right from when they are very young. They only need to adjust their imagination

into believing that they can achieve whatever goal that is before them and with that they will put it the required effort to make the achievement. The ability of the children to clearly create a distinction between the imaginary things and the real things at a very tender age demonstrates that they bear the ability to do great things as far as their socialization and education is concerned if the right positive energy is pumped into them.

The human ability of making the imaginary situations or things about the past, the present and the future real is existent right from childhood. This largely depends on the perception they have about these things and how they approach them. The human ability to decide on what to do to make the imaginary real is always questioned and “part of the answer is that our ability to imagine possible worlds is closely tied to our ability to think causally” (Gopnik 172). Better solutions can be found, or knowledge can be able to achieve reasonable development and offer solutions to the situations that are challenging to the world today if a proper understanding of these situations is achieved. There is no better understanding than that of knowing the basics of a situation. This can only be achieved by endeavoring to obtain causal knowledge and apply causal thinking in trying to turn the imaginary possibilities into reality. It is very important to what causes an event and what caused the other event and eventually finding out the relationship that exists between all the events. This is most likely going to trigger counterfactual thinking that will be instrumental in making informed decisions on how to turn imaginations into reality.

Consequently, such kind of knowledge and thinking in children can be a very strong tool in achieving great success in their education and socialization. “Chinese parents believe that the best way to protect their children is by preparing them for the future, letting them see what they’re capable of, and arming them with skills, work habits, and inner confidence” (Chua 4). Parents are helping their children to use their ability to think causally and the skills of gathering causal

knowledge so that they can develop into people who are able to offer real solutions to the problems that have been lingering from the past. With the best skills, they can be able to turn the imaginary possibilities that they could have built in their minds into tangible and viable realities. If the parents and the other educationists make it their priority to guide and help the children into not just doing anything or gaining knowledge randomly but to always be focused in particular situations, then the causal thinking will be invoked and they will be a solution oriented people in society.

The findings and sentiments of Alison Gopnik and Amy Chua are quite different but they both contribute significantly into developing the best perspective in making the best out of children regardless of their diverse backgrounds. Gopnik strongly brings out how imagination is a tool that is manifested in the humans' right from birth and how it is important in the gaining and articulation of knowledge. Chua on the other hand tries to point out several ways in which the parents should help their children improve their learning experiences and make the best out of the education they are exposed to. They both relate coherently in giving wholesome insights towards the strong relationship that lies between imagination and knowledge and how they can be articulated in making children's socialization and education as they grow.

Works Cited

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