

Taxonomy of Research in Philosophy of Education

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Abstract:

Philosophical descriptive researches have started gaining some ground these days. This trend proves an insight regarding the potentiality of descriptive study. Research in education fall within recognized disciplines—economics, sociology and so on. But these disciplines have their problems. J. Wilson (1972, p.6) asserts that in the case of education a new approach and range of technique is required for which ‘philosophy or conceptual investigation is crucially important’. Research in the area of philosophy of education is not just research in ‘*what is the case*’ but research in ‘*what ought to be the case*’. Being radically different from scientific educational research and historical educational research, philosophical research provides foundation for the development of theory, suggests problems and helps in solving the problems. This kind of research points out the way for the enhancement of quality and future of educational practices.

To elevate the research in philosophy to a greater height, this paper examines the whole panorama of philosophical analysis in philosophical research and presents the minute ability skills involved in the process in a hierarchical-clustered form by proposing a taxonomy of research in philosophy (TRIP). The what and why of TRIP presented in the paper demonstrates how can such a taxonomy stimulate depth in the inquiry on the part of the researchers. The proposed TRIP is established keeping in mind the nature of philosophy, research in philosophy and its significance. The making of TRIP explains how quality norms in philosophical research can be hallmarked in the paper.

This effort in proposing TRIP by the researcher is not something to be accepted as a final version. The road ahead is indicated for welcoming more focused reflection to give it a richer shape.

1.0 Introduction:

In periods of unacknowledged crisis we have to turn to philosophy “as a device for unlocking the riddles of any field”. Philosophical thinking is nothing but body of knowledge, concepts, assumptions and relationships originally defined by writers, philosophers, natural scientists, social scientists and artists. Pondering over such thinking and analysing these unique belongings entail extensive study and development of a critical attitude coupled with cognitive wrestling. This ‘less traveled path’ awaits insightful researchers to embrace wide range of thinking by making an uncompromising TRIP. This is because research on philosophical text in education becomes a meta-level activity of clarification and criticism of concepts, theories, and arguments appearing in the thinking as well as in on-going activity of education.

Such a wide view of philosophical research indicates a wide range of research problems

and issues than a mere study of an educational thinker or a system in general. Nisbet (1980, p.10) asserts that research in philosophy of education is a mode of thinking rather than a shortcut to answers. He means that research in education has always a practical aim of guiding the subsequent educational practices. Therefore, he declares, "... educational researches are the unacknowledged legislators of the next generation" (p.10). This demands a kind of discovery of hidden ideas and processes related to education from philosophical texts. It should raise important issues having relevance for or in education and tackle them philosophically – offering arguments, clarifying concepts and putting forward metaphysical views with intellectual support. It should scan the possibility for logical and conceptual examination. Philosophical insights should be gained about the relationship of education itself with other spheres of human activity. Such a phenomenal endeavor calls for very organized, finer and minute cognitive efforts on the part of the researcher. This paper delineates how from lower order ability skills higher order ability skills be gradually treaded on in research dealing with philosophy of education.

2.0 Nature of Philosophy And Philosophical Researches

Thinking philosophically doesn't just mean thinking about deep questions and seemingly unsolvable problems and coming up with one's "philosophy of life." Philosophy involves approaching questions about the nature of reality, knowing and knowledge, and morality using a set of methods and concepts that have been developed through the long history of philosophical thinking. Philosophical research is a term of art. What is to be analyzed (e.g., words and sentences vs. concepts and propositions), what counts as a successful analysis, and what philosophical fruits come from this process are core points of philosophical research (Hosper, p 12), This calls for greater understanding of logical reasoning, an enhanced ability to recognize and assess arguments, familiarity with important philosophical concepts, a greater appreciation for the use of philosophical thinking, an improved ability to develop arguments and improved ability to think critically not only about philosophical questions but also about other issues to generalize.

C. Seshadri (2008, p 3) indicated that Philosophy of education in its present critical / analytical mode is reinterpretation of the nature and scope of philosophy in the light of developments in the theory of knowledge and increased understanding of the broader view of education. Philosophy, according to this view, is not to be looked upon as a body of knowledge (a system of true propositions) but as a method or activity of analysis, clarification and criticism. All propositional knowledge is subject to tests of public verification, reliability and coherence and these are truth criteria that are satisfied only by the deductive and empirical forms of inquiry. A fundamental task of inquiry is to disentangle different contexts in which education is discussed and consider the basic ideas and appropriate logical criteria relevant to each (Lucas, 123). The cognitive function of it covers almost all the aspects of the language of education, its concepts, beliefs, inferences, and theories (C. Seshadri ,2008 p 5). This is shored up by what Prof R. S. Peters ,(Scheffler, p 67) the chief architect of concept analysis in education says that philosophy of education, as, is to be seen not as a body of true propositions but as a method, an intellectual

activity of cognitive analysis and elucidation. It involves such formal tasks as: analysis of educational concepts, logical appraisal of different kinds of educational statements, validation of theories and justification of prescriptive conclusions of the theory. Further, as a meta activity of analysis and criticism, philosophy can be 'done' on any field of human inquiry, science, literature, art, mathematics, history, politics and education. The lasting contributions of philosophic thinking are the dispositions it seeks to promote: clarity, consistency, rigour of thought, concern for semantic meaningfulness, methodological awareness and consciousness of assumptions. These are particularly significant in the Indian context wherein philosophical thinking in education lacks clarity and rigour.

3.0 The State of Art in the Research in Philosophy of Education

"Philosophy of education" is used, in India, to refer either to undifferentiated discourse (sometimes empirical, sometimes historical and generally hortatory) about aims, curriculum, methodology and other aspects of education or, in its not so inarticulate form, to the application of the speculative thesis (metaphysical, epistemological, axiological) of general philosophy, to draw 'implications' for educational theory and practice (C. Seshadri (2008)). For a long time philosophy had come to mean only the study of individual thinkers / systems / schools; the view that this is all there is to philosophy of education dies hard. This restrictive paradigm has spelled doom for the growth of the field. The analytical movement seems to have had little or no influence on this area of study.

Philosophy of education in India presents a sorry spectacle. The scanning of the researches done in this field reveal that 'study', 'educational philosophy' or 'the educational thoughts' and 'contribution of (this or that) a thinker' or 'of scriptural text', either single or in a comparative frame are the most frequent words / phrases. It makes clear that this type of researches dominate the area of research in educational philosophy

Like the titles, the objectives too, seem traditional and intend to inquire only superficial aspects. They lack in examining the hardcore philosophical basis of the subject. They indicate broadly and loosely the spectrum of issues and problems that have engaged the attention of philosophers, past and present. Application of philosophy to education, its goals, processes, concepts, theories, are not legitimately inferred in most of the researches. A gross negligence of genuine philosophical concerns: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics make these studies 'philosophical only in namesake'. An organic synthesis of philosophy per se, with educational practices is a wide gap – challenging future researchers to work on. Hardly any study has referred to 'philosophical analysis'. becomes clear that the research in philosophy of education lacks in quality and methodological rigour.

The following recommendations are made to strengthen the trend of research in the area of philosophy of education.

- It should raise important issues having relevance for or in education and tackle them philosophically – offering arguments, clarifying concepts and putting forward metaphysical views with intellectual support.
- It should scan the possibility for logical and conceptual examination. Philosophical insights should be gained about the relationship of education itself with other spheres of human activity.
- To engage in the researches with focus on themes – concepts, problems, principles, keeping personalities and institutions only in perspectives.

The above discussion reflects the views of Wilson (1972, p.VII) who says, *“It is hence especially regrettable and regrettably obvious, that developments in philosophy over the last few decades have made little impact on educational research”.*

4.0 What and Why Taxonomy

Taxonomy (from Greek *taxis* meaning arrangement or division and *nomos* meaning law) is the science of classification according to a pre-determined system, with the resulting catalog used to provide a conceptual framework for discussion, analysis, or information retrieval. In theory, the development of a good taxonomy takes into account the importance of separating elements of a group (taxon) into subgroups (taxa) that are mutually exclusive, unambiguous, and taken together, include all possibilities. Taxonomy necessitates a method of ordering phenomenon in such a way that the major distinctions between classes should get reflected as well as ordering reveals significant relationships among phenomenon (Bloom, p17)

The importance in taxonomy lies in the fact that it points out order out of chaos by pointing out the similarities and differences between the minute things/acts/skills contributing to a major class of things/action/skill as per the characteristics of each. The internal consistency of things/ideas/acts/skills reflected in taxonomy teaches to see the whole phenomenon in a micro as well as macro level (viewing individual case in relation to the whole and viewing the whole in relation to the individual case). The order as per classes presents a genealogy of any phenomenon or idea. No complete or sharp distinctions among things/ideas/acts/skills is possible. Yet the classification indicating similarities and differences in internal characteristics generate understanding about distinguished hierarchical gradation of things/ideas/acts/skills. The sound basis for ordering the categories can be treated as a learning tool to identify and understand what is the root, stem, branches, leaves and fruits of any discipline.

5.0 Why Taxonomy of Research in Philosophy Of Education

Philosophy of education being a rich terrain is a source of infinite knowledge. The limited, but dominant, view of philosophy of education as study of the educational ideas of individuals and institutions within the framework ‘isms’ has virtually made the field stagnant and aloof from on-going happenings in education. In contrast, the field remains vibrant with its potential engagement in analyzing philosophical analysis of texts to fetch pedagogical insights.

The taxonomy of research in philosophy of education (TRIP) will enlist, order and classify the minuscule skill-clusters involved in to philosophical research and will offer us a span to learn the relative hierarchy of the dispositions that philosophy seeks to promote – clarity, consistency and rigour of Thought, concern for semantic meaningfulness, methodological awareness, consciousness of assumptions. This insight is the general prerequisite for the intellectual pursuit of knowledge in education. The field of education essentially needs a good deal of hard clear thinking of a philosophic kind. TRIP will guide for conceptual philosophical venture to increase and deepen our understanding of how and up to what level to think in our process of inquiry. TRIP will aid in scrutinizing different analytical skills in research. It will also provide a perspective for intellectual dialogue and debate besides deepening our understanding of issues related to Educational theory and practice.

6.0 Proposed Taxonomy (TRIP)

Keeping in view the thinking skills involved in research in philosophy of education, minute thinking-acts are enlisted cluster-wise in ordered form in the following table.

Table 1. Taxonomy of Research in Philosophy Of Education (TRIP)

Ability Cluster	Ability Indicating Thinking-Acts
Framing	Observe, locate, find, identify, collect, record, enlist, sort, cluster,
Sifting	Explore, consider, select, edit, eliminate, screen, narrow down, scrutinize, discern, suggest, analyze, specify
Meaning Making	Comprehend, understand, infer, Explain, clarify, prove, , consult, refer, interpret, searching for roots, correlate, finding vagueness, differentiate, compare, associate ideas, equate, deduce, judge, rationalize, signify, find essence, imply, reduce, compress
Restructuring	Order, tabulate, form, organize, establish, weave, edify, put together, shape, design, outline, set , adapt, strategize, generate, build ,produce, create
Reflecting	Speculate, perceive, simulate, assimilate, deliberate, ponder, abstract, give reason, appreciate, realize, introspect, raise doubts, predict, assume, rectify, fortify, anticipate, recommend, evaluate, question, review, moderate, validate, penetrate, pitting
Concretizing	Generalize, propose, conclude, induct, consolidate, strengthen, compose, summarize, compile, define, constructing theory, develop, cultivate, formulate, generate, establish

The abilities are clustered looking to the quality of cognitive effort to be put in during thinking required at various stages of philosophical research. The ability indicating thinking-acts may be actively spread over throughout various stages of the study.

FRAMING is the most primary ability cluster for pursuing in philosophical research. It is the lowest rung in the ladder of accomplishment of philosophical research. By framing we mean to erect a framework or a grid which would give a concrete shape to the study gradually. It is a filament which would enlighten the task up to its completion. As indicated earlier this cluster ability is required all through the study. E.g. In the initial stage the researcher needs to identify idea units having pedagogical escalation. As the researcher proceeds ahead in the stage of analyzing the ideas, he needs to identify which established school of thought is nearer to what idea he conveys. During the stage of deriving conclusions, he again identifies the major focus of the group of ideas. Thus the cluster-framing and the related thinking acts must be vital all through the philosophical research.

SIFTING is an ability cluster which demands a little higher quality of thinking than the earlier cluster as it anticipates the researcher to pass through mental filtration. The researcher has to think in terms of what is to be included and what to discard in the entire process. This mental processes of exploring, examining, sorting and selecting direct towards the other higher rungs of the ladder. In the philosophical researches selection of words, selection of technique for interpretation and discussing the finding requires sifting on the part of researcher. Sifting is like a check-post which facilitates appropriate words, ideas, methodology to pass successfully to have a smooth research-ride ahead.

MEANING MAKING is an ability cluster which claims higher quality thinking. Research in philosophy is deeply embedded with personal meaning making. This ability cluster is a symbol of the researcher's comprehensive lens from where appropriate sight is perceptible. While making meaning in different stages the researcher's eye is coated with his higher level cognitive "I" This ability skill offers the bricks and cement in isolation form to be constructed with later. In philosophical research the researcher interprets isolated ideas in the initial stage to search for philosophically pregnant meaning and then interprets them in meaningful groups to build pedagogical insight during the process. Thus the ability of meaning making is essential all through the research.

RESTRUCTURING is the ability cluster which offers a new shape to the collected, selected and meaning extracted ideas throughout the process. The scattered ideas and interpreted pedagogical derivations are sculptured in a new philo-edu art. This skill cluster comes to researchers help when ideas are grouped in a progressive form to unfold a conceptual clarity. This skill cluster is also sought after to evolve a methodology for interpretation of ideas as per the requirements of the objectives. This skill cluster is like re-wiring cables to let more than one bulbs give an enhancing effect.

REFLECTING is a skill cluster demanding further work on what is reconstructed to enhance its quality further. Whatever is reconstructed is reflected on in philosophical research. This higher level thinking enables the researcher to be insightful. Any decisions taken right from selecting ideas to analyzing ideas are followed by this act. This skill cluster promotes a more complex and interrelated mental schema as it involves looking for commonalities, differences, and

interrelations beyond their superficial elements. Reflection allows thoughts to be extended and systematic by looking back upon what is comprehended. Reflection facilitates the researcher to grow with knowledge, skills, feelings and attitudes. It generates self-revelation in a researcher.

CONCRETIZING is the highest skill cluster with which a concrete shape to airy ideas is imparted during the study. It is like a mental plan becoming a reality. The insights developed through the previous ability clusters is concretized in the form of something new to be developed and to be directly utilized or implemented in education. This part of it fuses philosophy with education and generates philosophy of education.

The skill clusters thus indicate a way for a quality gait for research in philosophy of education. A Researcher engaged in any lower level or higher order cognitive effort can visualize quality-height by stepping up and down (frequently, as per the need) the ladder of thinking.

7.0 Significance of TRIP

Research in philosophy of education may seem to be a daunting task. And the field-philosophy of education is constantly developing, this demands to see the task as a developmental moment, rather than as a chore. The TRIP may prove to be significant to the following:

- The field of research in philosophy will get a concretized structure in methodological aspect of undertaking a study in philosophy. The internal consistency of various skills involved in the process can be visualized and a holistic understanding in relation to its parts can be understood.
- It will help the researchers to get acquainted with what is expected from them in terms of cognitive skills before they take up any study. It may be helpful to researchers in this field to know what is knowledge, what is worth knowing and what can be constructed as knowledge for education.. It may help them to reflect on what methods they expect to utilize to accomplish their goals.
- The classification of clustered skills indirectly indicates tactics for learning how to be cognitively analytical in dealing with philosophical text to create a compound which has a pedagogic flavour.
- The TRIP can also be used as a tool to evaluate the researches done in this field with a focus on the amount of thinking absorbed skills riveted in to it.

8.0 The Road Ahead

The concern and function of TRIP is to offer an insight into how to go about in philosophical researches. In the midst of a few of embedded criticisms on researches in philosophy of education, a structured view of skills anticipated in this field was required to be developed. This paper is a primary stride to orient the need for having taxonomy in research in philosophy. The odyssey of philosophical analysis for extracting pedagogical insight is infinite calling for refinement in what is proposed here. In an expedition to qualitative theorization, this endeavour is just a trip. Further thinking is welcome in the form of doubts, questions, observations,

suggestions and feedback to give it a better shape.

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