W I S D O M

3(16), 2020

YEREVAN – 2020

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ENGAGING WITH INFLUENTIAL THINKERS: EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES AND POLICIES ENDURING THE TEST OF TIME

Abstract

Literature spanning from the time of the third and fourth industrial revolution mentions how modernity has, in many ways, made circumstances profoundly better for humanity than what used to be in the historic and ancient worlds. Nevertheless, extant literature also speaks of how the manifested benefits of modernity inculcated ills that stand in the way of humanity being humane and of exercising human personhood. This article puts forth a consoling and a divine virtue - wisdom and wisdom philosophy - thoughts based on wisdom to bridge the gap between getting progressive and being humane. Curiosity thereby wisdom; starts with wonder, as resonated in child and man - whereby aiming to be inculcated and embedded, at a stage, when one is mostly trainable and adaptable lies the objective of this essay - to reignite one's mind to the philosophical values of influential thinkers, explore of its existence, relevance and its purpose for modern humanity. A qualitative methodology was employed to gather information supplemented by knowledge from archived literature. This scholarly piece of writing discusses an approach using as an analogy - the fulcrum, load and effort mechanism to embed wisdom based philosophy thoughts and practices in educational policies for the stakeholders of knowledge.

Keywords: philosophy, policy, philosophical thoughts, thinkers, education.

Introduction

The ancient intellectual, Pythagoras was the first to introduce himself to a community as a philosophos/philosopher meaning "lover of wisdom", he whose philosophy still governs the world of mathematics and is applied to this very day in all facets of real life. So, what is this philosophy that is so much linked to wisdom, intellect and love? Thematic evidence has shown that philosophy is a set of ideals, standards or beliefs that governs an action or activity or used to describe behaviour and thought. From time immemorial, this body of knowledge has laid the foundation and given meaning and structure to what lies there in reality. To the question, does philosophy have practical implications to society and individual? The founding father of Western philosophy, Socrates visualised and emphasised that philosophy should achieve beneficial results for the greater good and well-being towards the most significant number in society ("Socrates Biography", 2019).

The most refined influential thinker, Plato's philosophical thoughts to make individual life flourishing was by giving oneself the mental space to think through or subjecting one's ideas to examination rather than following popular opinions or doxa which edges towards wrong values in relationships and careers. Plato's phi-

losophy advocates to know thyself rather than be pulled around by feelings.[1] Have these basic truths endured the test of time and given themselves to be embedded in policies, mission, vision statements of organisations, educational institutions, curriculums, homes and individual life? This article is a scholarly study that focusses on reigniting our minds to the philosophical values of influential thinkers, explores and discusses using fulcrum, load and effort analogy on the philosophy of educational policies.

Educational Policy - A Panoramic Understanding

One of the definitions for educational policy uses the noun "principle" alongside others such as rules and laws that govern the system of education. It is this word 'principle' that the study mainly focusses on and collates it to the construct of a philosophical set of ideals, standards, values and beliefs.

We observe that education covers a large spectrum of levels from kindergarten to university including job - oriented continuing education and job training, in this case, it is only proper to validate that the aspect of education policy, it's making, administration and evaluation affects people of all ages pursuing education and their learning outcomes. Moral education, as is existent in the educational domain, is a manifests training in the aspects of wisdom.

Based on the evidence taken from research works of Codd[2] and McLaughlin (1999), in the area of educational policy, an analysis was done that derives different perspective for understanding the flexibility of the policy to embed newer concepts and values. The table below depicts the analysis:

An Analysis of Educational Policy and the Insights for Philosophical Ramifications		
What is it?	Action-oriented detailed prescription	
What is it for?	Preservation or alteration/modification of educational practices	
Who purports from it?	The various stakeholders of education from philosophers, policy makers, government to students, parents and society et al.	
Whom should it impact and for what need?	Aspirants/Learners - to influence their senses and context of learning	Agencies/Bodies - for power and control
Who works on it?	Governmental agencies, educational electorates, subject and teacher association, think tanks	

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[1]   The School of Life. (2014, October 20). Philosophy - Plato [Video File]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/-VDiyQub6vpw.

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[2]   See Codd, J. A. (1995). *Educational Policy as a Field of Philosophical Enquiry*. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Oxford.

How is it viewed differently?	Originates at different levels and contexts in the educational system	Different languages of policy debate	Scope of their content and application	The process of policy-making	The policy itself	Power, politics and control orientation
Insights How does it affect the contribution of philosophy into policy?	Awareness where contribution can be made	Awareness what type of philosophical contribution can be made	Helps us to reflect on which policy to consider	Identify areas where philosophers can make their contribution	What type of philosophy can be embedded?	Alerts us on Influence on policy-making, development and evaluation

A Tabular Summary of the Works of Codd[3] and McLaughlin (1999) on Educational Policy

The above tabular display of dissected and assimilated information puts one in a position to ascertain and validate educational policies and its various parameters which are highly analysed to understand the contribution that philosophy can make on it. The above tabular analysis is further supported intellectually by Mijuskovic (2002) statement that philosophy is often a question of why, how, what, who, whom and when. This is important as it allows for a deeper evaluation and dwelling upon of what is given to us and what is now engaged within the modern educational system.

Philosophical Thoughts - What is Given to Us?

Over the centuries, we come across great philosophers that have contributed thoughts that have become an eye-opener to a new and a better way of doing things and achieving results. Some of the thoughts of influential thinkers and their contribution to the world of education are elaborated:

Mahatma Gandhi, an enigma in the proponent of peace, experimented with ideas for education and posited that for sound educational philosophy, one needs a harmony of intellect, hard work and passion (Chamyal, 2017, pp. 311-318). Gandhian philosophy stressed on the simplicity in language, literature and life. The philosophical thinking of Gandhi at the time that he lived was to align the educational learning outcomes in line with the needs of society, based on which Indian educational policies were drafted and put in place in the consolidation of his philosophy. To a great extent, his thoughts have opened up a new educational outlook benefitting many. Thus, we can say that the Gandhian educational philosophy is with a vision and a learning outcome to contribute towards the reformation of the economy of the country, ensure national integrity and help build cohesion and solidarity in the society.

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[3] See Codd, J. A. (1995). *Educational Policy as a Field of Philosophical Enquiry*. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Oxford.

A pioneering educationist of the 20th century, John Dewey's, educational thoughts, and writings, gave a new direction to education at the turn of the century. Dewey rejected authoritarian structures and subsequently, the traditional teaching methods. He believed in progressive education and advocated for reforms in pedagogical aspects of teaching and curricula; most importantly, Dewey (1938) believed that at the centre of the whole academia was the student, and the pioneer's educational philosophy and reforms were concerned primarily with the student (pp. 1-99). Today, Dewey's philosophy of education and its relation to experience, democracy, humanism, and pragmatism have largely affected the modern system of education all over the world (Theobald, 2009).

The mystifying and intellectual Indian literary genius, Rabindranath Tagore's ideals of educational philosophy resonate with the tone of harmony with diverse facets of life which include educational, cultural, artistic elements. Tagore's philosophy aims to develop the spiritual as well as the physical growth of the learner as he believed that the manifestation of personality depends upon self-realisation, spiritual knowledge and health of an individual. In Tagore's humanism approach, the need for co-relation between man and nature is essential for ensuring peace and justice. Tagore gave importance to spiritual and moral education rather than on scriptural knowledge for the integral development of a human. Education, he asserted, teaches people to realise the oneness of the globe and establish a universal brotherhood and based on intercultural understanding (Srivastava, 2017, pp. 11-21).

Sharma and Yadav (2018) investigated the philosophical concept of integral education of Sri Aurobindo, the Indian philosopher who contrib-

uted his vision on human progress. Sri Aurobindo's experimentation sought to develop an integral man. His educational philosophy considers five principal aspects of human life: physical education, vital education, mental education, psychic education and spiritual or supramental education. All these elements are complementary and need to be nurtured until the end of life (Sharma & Yadav, 2018, pp. 323-338). Srivastava puts forth that the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is based on the evolution of the idea of "total humanity" with the emphasis placed on the principles of growth in unity that maintains the evolution of diversity. The education system, as proposed by this, Sage proposes to prepare an individual by moulding the person to be radiating and practising humanism and contributing as a member of a society helping towards nation-building. His philosophy also gives importance to the fact that there is a moral responsibility for individuals to transcend narrower interests to wider ones. Thus, the motto aimed at is that man has to develop first as a human being, then as a citizen and finally, as an individual (Srivastava, 2017, pp.11-21).

The research article by Banerjee and Mahi highlights the contributions of the Indian visionary and a great thinker, Swami Vivekananda. This pioneer is noted for his vision and educational insights in the Indian context. The educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda considers education to be a powerful instrument of social change. Accordingly, education is the continuous process of "the manifestation of perfection that is already in man" (Banerjee & Mahi, 2015, p. 786). It covers all the aspects of life such as intellectual, physical, material, emotional, spiritual and moral, and it can remove the major evils as priest-craft, ignorance, poverty and tyranny of the wise. The educational thoughts of

Swami Vivekananda have much significance to the modern education system, as mentioned in the research writing of Banerjee and Mahi, has lost its connection with the values of human life. The education system now emphasizes rote learning without paying attention to the reformation of mind. There is a need to remove the obstacles and provide all the necessary opportunities to students so that they develop an understanding of what education propounds and further their concentration to acquire knowledge. Swami Vivekananda is quoted as saying "True education contributes to the nation and should not be restricted by individual ambitions" (Banerjee & Mahi, pp. 786-794)

Dr Annie Besant was successful in building a new system of education which emphasised on the aspect of spiritual development. The research works of Srivastava (2015) points out that Dr Besant believed a spiritual revolution was a need and would take place in India. Her spiritual vision based on Theosophy is considered a scientific instrument in bringing about a peaceful and silent spiritual revolution in terms of harmony, peace, love and sympathy, patience, progress and prosperity. There was a revolution by way of moral and spiritual education through Dr Annie Besant's philosophy. Therefore, it may be said that she appears to have made considerable progress and development by bringing the light of theosophical knowledge and wisdom to spiritual instruction, spiritual learning, spiritual training and spiritual teaching (Srivastava, 2015, pp. 676-679). Thereby, engaging with this influential thinker, the author concludes that Dr Besant was a great spiritually intelligent and competent personality, not only in India but also in the world.

The educational thoughts of Dr S. Radhakrishnan are not merely idealistic but also very much pragmatic. Dr Radhakrishnan though being an idealistic philosopher, it was pragmatic philosophy that influenced his educational thoughts (Behera, 2015, p. 197). Dr Radhakrishnan defines education as the instrument for social, economic and cultural change. For social and national integration, for increasing productively, education should be adequately utilised. He believed that "the importance of education is not only in knowledge and skill, but it is to help us to live with others" (Bhatia & Sarin, 2004, p. 239). Behera study points out that the great educationalist and former President of India opined that, only the right kind of education could solve many problems of the society and the country. He wants that form of education which will help and lead one to see the other world, the invisible and intangible world beyond space and time. Education has to help us realise what we have already in us. The meaning of education is to emancipate the individual, and we need the education of the wholeness - mental, physical, intellectual and spiritual. Education should develop in the minds of students a love of sustained thinking, adherence to truth and the power of resistance to popular sentiments and mob passion (Behera, 2015, pp. 196-205).

Many more philosophical thoughts and ideals by influential thinkers influence the thinking of humankind and open up a newer world of betterness and prosperity.

Wisdom Sustains Personhood?

Federick J. White has titled his scholarly research writing published in 2013 as "Personhood: An Essential Characteristics of Human Species". Plato in The Republic quotes "The direction in which education starts a man (person),

will determine his future life." The questions that are asked here and the belief carried forth in the context of an education provider would be of how wisdom based philosophy and even moral education based studies and projects; lead any stakeholder of education towards exercising the element of personhood which establishes the goodness and humanity in peoplehood. The element of personhood in this modern time and era can be re-established and invoked into man's thoughts and interactions by the consoling virtues of wisdom; re-invigorating humanness that which has become almost diluted since the advent of modernisation and advanced modernisation in the current fifth industrial revolution. The author proposed to propound on the truth that human social order - a concept that aims to bring about the mindset of organized, coordinated, co-operative working environment, stability and structure in any form of institution recognizes the importance of the construct of Personhood (White, 2013, p. 74).

Personhood lies at the core, that central element promoting a positive social order. The generic definition of personhood is the act of considering the moral and ethical dimensions when dealing with a human. It is the technical term that constitutes all the determinants that are put in place by theories that make a person to exist and co-survive with dignity both individually and in a community. Can the consoling and divine virtue of wisdom that facilitates and have implications for promoting personhood both in oneself and seeing it in others, help to maintain that prosperous social order. How does this function? To understand further, the author aims to understand "personhood" which has gained much prominence and has its application extended to various other domains of knowledge from its original field of theology and biomedical ethics.

White (2013) puts forth two paradigms that are, in a way, conflicting in practising personhood (pp. 74-90). The two conflicting paradigms are the existential paradigm of personhood and the relational paradigm of personhood. The former puts forth the understanding that personhood is an inherent attribute of an individual; independent of individual status and the latter puts forth the thinking that personhood is the amount of value society puts on an individual. This conflicting notion is proposed to be bridged under wisdom and sense of divinity taught and trained from early days of an individual and is then further established by training and practices based on wisdom based philosophy in-built in institutions that create an institutional culture of grace where it becomes a social norm. This calls for a study on how much the above mentions ideal is in practice and what necessary actions or studies need to be done to have the notion in place.

Methodology

Referred literature was used to understand and analyse how philosophers and influential thinkers of the by-gone era contributed their wisdom to frame educational philosophies to uplift humankind humanely. The researcher wanted to understand the mindset of the current stakeholders of education especially from the student community on where their perception lies related to moral education along with wisdom-based approaches that they experienced and would like to be seen implemented in educational establishments. In this regards, this study undertook a qualitative methodology. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview among research scholars/doctoral students of different disciplines who were selected ran-

domly. The sample items had varied demographics by way of age, work and life experiences, marital status, religion and culture. Feedback and opinions were obtained related to the theme of wisdom, moral viewpoint in education and student life.

The following are the questions created based on the achieved literature and based on awareness of current scenario related to policy and philosophical situations.

1) Do you think the higher educational institution you studied had focused on any philosophical theme as a subject or an activity that inculcated good values in an individual?

2) Do you try to practice or inculcate good values that you were taught anywhere else or even in the current curriculum while interacting or engaging in activities or studies in your higher educational days?

3) Where do you think you have learnt or witnessed most of the good value, belief and attitudes?

4) Do you think you learn good values from the stakeholders of education while interacting with them?

5) Do you think that the current higher education system needs to inculcate into their curriculum, activities that foster good character, value and morals?

6) Do you think you can remember or do you read about influential philosophers or even ordinary people who practice good values and action and are motivated by it?

7) Do you think students once graduated from higher education courses, have sufficient backing to be good citizens and contribute in their way towards the good of the society?

Results and Responses:
Consolidated and Analysed

This section deals with the result and responses of qualitative research conducted. Opinions and feedback generated from the respondents were mixed, and each had their own experiences to share. Most of the respondents had responded by saying their higher education curriculum or even the institution where they had studied earlier did not include the importance of moral or value-based approaches. It purely focused on rote learning and knowledge related to subject discipline. The respondents said they had obtained their share of moral and value-based learning from home, parents and pre-training but not from their higher degree learning institutions or college.

The respondents further responded by saying they exercised good character, morals and values as much possible while interacting during their earlier higher educational days. They were motivated by others who indulged in such positive behaviours and would carry forward the same. The respondents replied that they were appreciative and motivated by the moral and values-based actions of the different stakeholders of education during their growing days. Some even exercised the same in their professions too.

The respondents never give up on a chance to read about influential as well as ordinary people who engage in value-based action. They rely on the wordings of philosophers for motivation which they saw on hoarding and walls as they travelled and it influenced their outlooks.

The respondents believe that the younger generation of students needs role models, need to witness good action from others to carry forwards better values-based character and behav-

iour. Respondents were of the viewpoint that the younger generation already involves good citizens who need to be guided by the stakeholders of education. The respondents believed that value-based activities in the curriculum and those mentioned in the mission, vision, core value statements of higher educational institutions would definitely influence the younger generation positively as they take their place in the real world. The opinions of the respondents were uniform regarding the role that the various stakeholders of education play in character and value building.

Based on the analysis of the qualitative research conducted, it can be concluded that the respondents were satisfied with the value system inculcated in them by their school and early childhood upbringing but unanimously agreed that there is a lack of such training in higher educational level. In this context, the author reviewed archived literature and utilised the knowledge to find a linkage between educational policy and philosophical thoughts for higher education using the analogy of the fulcrum, load and effort.

Educational Policy and Philosophical Thoughts – The Fulcrum, Load and Effort Analogy

The research endeavour of McLaughlin (2000) has put forward an understanding of the linkage between philosophy and educational policy building. Accordingly, it is stated that several complex and interrelated factors and influences, educational policies are designed. Not all but some of these factors or influences are philosophical by nature. McLaughlin argues that philosophy has a potentially important role and contribution in the making of policies for education, but some underexplored complexities need to be examined if the fruitfulness of philosophical values is to be realized (pp. 441-454). In this context, certain philosophical and wisdom based variables are considered and elaborated. An analogy of the fulcrum, load and effort mechanism; as that which is used in the domain of Physics is brought in and linked with the terms - possibilities, tensions and tasks for the purpose of collaborating and to instill a conative attitude by linking philosophical thoughts and values into policies which regulating education.

a. The Fulcrum of the Linkage: Possibilities

The fulcrum represents the main/pivotal/central point that makes a system work by providing a connection between the two ends. The fulcrum analogy represents the possibilities that are available to link and embed philosophical thoughts and values into policies regulating education.

Soltis (1988) proposes that there are several different but related modes and levels of relationship between the two constructs of philosophical thoughts and educational policies. On such can be explained with a 'distance/proximity' continuum relating to the location of philosophising concerning the policy-making process (McLaughlin, 2000).

Distance   Proximity

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One end of the distance continuum, we get to place those events where philosophising occurs in locations outside the educational premises of schools and colleges. Other sources such as books, articles, lectures, seminars and other types of publications provide valuable information as

to inculcating the concept of philosophising and embedding it into policymaking. These sources are resources and knowledge for policy-makers to absorb and implement into their tasks. White (2000) advice that the effect these alternate source of information provides to policy-makers cannot be underestimated. At the mid-point of the continuum, we find events such as seminars and discussions organised by philosophers and policy-makers to share their viewpoints and perspectives. Events of this nature, have taken up policy-sensitive topics over the years like moral and spiritual development and conducted valuable discourses and produced pamphlets that circulate the type of information and knowledge that can be absorbed and utilised. Further strengthening, the movement on the continuum towards the policy-making end, the direct involvement of philosophers through memberships in the policy-making committees, working together with teachers (Griffiths 1997; 1999), as chair in advisory boards lead to the possibility mindset where it is not an impossible effort to link the two construct.

The extent of the differences in educational policy can be plotted on a continuum with generality and specificity at two ends (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 442).

Generality   Specificity

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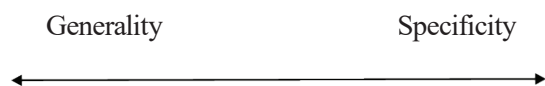
At one end of the continuum, we find policies that are much more general, such as those involving matters such as aims of education and structure of the educational system. On the other end of the continuum, are very specific policies such as those related to teaching such as tutoring strategies for different topics and strategies, analyses and discussions of current educational

policies. At the mid-point of the continuum, as in the distance-proximity continuum, is the activities and work which engages in more detail in the critical assessment of practically significant educational assumptions and theories.

Furthermore, another continuum with characteristics as depth and surface is invoked (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 442).

Depth   Surface

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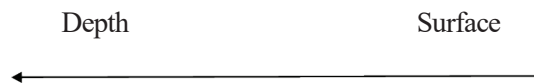
The depth end of the continuum lies educational policies with good philosophical implications and ramifications. Here, we find policies that that deal with the general area of 'value education'. On the surface end of the continuum, we find policies that are not suited for philosophical reflections.

McLaughlin (2000) states that general policies not suitable for philosophical reflection and specific policies may be rich in philosophical ramification (p.443)

These aspects resemble the function of the fulcrum to shows the possibility of the linkage of the two constructs under study.

b. The Load of the Linkage: Tensions

The load represents the challenges that arise when the two constructs of philosophising and educational policymaking are considered. Pring (1995) suggests that some of the tensions or the burden in the relationship between the two constructs is attributed mostly to the policy-making climate and attitude of the current times (pp. 101-112).

Scheffler (1991) proposes that the attitude of the policymaker is practical rather than 'reminiscent' or 'speculative' (p. 112). There is a difference in the aims, values, interests and priori-

ties between philosophy on one hand and policymaking on the other. Educational policy is not purely aimed at the elucidation of truth or goodness but the resolution of practical issues and problems. Concerns of educational policy are primarily practical such as evaluative and technical rather than theoretical (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 450).

One of the consequences of general tension is because of the gap between decision taken on one hand and discussion and criticism on the other (Scheffler, 1991, pp. 115-116). Practical constraint on decision making such as time can cause often limited practical discussion and criticism. Scheffler further, points out that 'self-consciousness increases the burden of choice and enlarges the perception of uncertainty, making the pervasive drive to simplify, objectify and reduce that which is fully understandable'. Philosophy is attracted to the non-instrumental exploration of complexity. McLaughlin claims that vagueness and ambiguity has a lucrative and constructive effect as in the other aspects of education. This causes a tension aspect in that intrusion of philosophical considerations to a policy-making process more difficult and opaque which leads to a need for further discussion and arguments rather than a decision (McLaughlin, 1994, pp. 458-460).

Another related tension as per suggested by McLaughlin is how philosophical endeavour will bite into the educational practice, the term which he coins as 'taxonomical bite' where the requirement to implement that which is mentioned using the philosophical aspect such as moral education which will cause the educational institution to identify a particular set of qualities, attributes, skills, abilities and other features which are relevant to the teaching of moral sciences. Proper mapping of the new philosophical generated sub-

ject or practice into the existing educational system or curriculum puts a higher responsibility such that it is not misconceived or irrelevant (Wilson, 1996, p. 90).

c. The Effort of the Linkage: Task

The effort analogy represents the task or actions that can be done in the light of the fulcrum (possibilities) and the load (tensions) that have been highlighted above. The approaches mentioned below are based on the discussion in the fulcrum and load aspects. From it, the tasks or effort part of the linkage between philosophising and educational policy gets its wings.

Hogan (1995) puts forward the mindset that while philosophy needs to adopt a proper modest approach in its contribution, educational policy-makers need to acknowledge that the content and context of their work is sufficiently saturated with values, beliefs, values, commitments which are philosophical by nature. Awareness of the modes and levels of relationship between these two stakeholders promote the kind of dialogues that need to exist. Here, the first effort or task is creating a suitable transformative climate that is a shift from the general political one to that which is amenable and supportive of dialogues between the two parties.

The next effort is in line with the load or tension aspect of philosophers who are involved in the policymaking, and it is suggested that they need to maintain a considerable practical judgement in their approach towards their task. Concerning the strains arising out limited and lack of practically focused decisions, philosophers need to be able to make capable and sound decisions in line with the amount of philosophical illumination needed and in which matters, in the imperatives of consensus and decisions, the practicality of taxonomic bias, in the amount of bal-

ance between critique and positive argument and how are the optimal solutions to be obtained from such a policy implementation?

McLaughlin (1999) also emphasises on the particular language that is used in framing the philosophical policy as the crude nature of pure philosophical wordings cannot be fitted as such into the policy statement but the usage of language that is commonly understood and spoken that bring out rational and empirical realities.

Conclusion

Aristotle, in his work titled "Metaphysics", says that philosophy starts with wonder. Will it be right to say that wisdom begins with wonder? In the academic world, philosophy finds its place, professionally contributing to disciplines and statements of purpose. Wisdom touches the heart more closely. Is wisdom an individual make up? Can we say wisdom and philosophy are the same? One thing for sure, wisdom has a special place among other virtues. Fileva and Tresan (2013), states that "other virtues typically allow of misuse or undesirable surpluses. An intellectually gifted person may use her intelligence to commit fraud, and a witty person may use her wit to ridicule others. One may be kind to a fault, courageous to the point of foolhardiness, too patient, or too generous. However, one cannot, it seems, be too wise or put one's wisdom to bad use. When it comes to wisdom, good use is part of the very notion of wisdom." Here, lies the lineage from wonder to wisdom, wisdom to philosophy, from philosophy to individual and societal good.

This study thus concludes with bringing an insight into the lineage of educational philosophical thoughts, philosophy, policy-making for the

need of inculcating wisdom-based approaches in the higher educational setting.

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