Chapter 6

Rousseau's Social Contract and Conflicts in Education

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Introduction

In this chapter, the theme of conflicts in education will be explored from a theoretical viewpoint. How are conflicts essential for the growth and development of a child into an adult, and for society becoming more human? Jean-Jacques Rousseau's pedagogical texts, social *contract and his other philosophical writings were used in* this chapter, to explore the question of reconciling conflicts in education. The chapter concentrates its examination on the concept of social contractthat Rousseau employs valuation of conflicts in education and the practical suggestions for the application of conflicts in the aims and objectives of education. This work have selected those fragments that relate, explicitly or implicitly, to conflicts and dealing with conflicts in education, and while carefully reviewing the role of Rousseau's social contract in existing debate between liberalists and paternalists on one hand the proponents of agonistic and deliberative democratic education on the other hand.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Rousseau is born in Geneva in a Protestant family of French Origin in 1712. His mother dies in childbirth. As a child, Rousseau loves to read serious books.In 1722 Rousseau's father is forced to leave Geneva, and the young Jean-Jacques is raised by a Protestant minister, Lambercier. He spends two happy years with Lambercier. In 1727 Rousseau begins work as an apprentice to an engraver.In 1728 Rousseau flees Geneva to Annecy, France.

One day, while meditating on the question of a new intellectual competition, in 1749 'Has the revival of the sciences and the arts contributed to improving morality?' Rousseau decides to answer the question by attacking the Enlightenment. The course of his life and his ideas is forever changed. In 1750 Rousseau wins the competition for his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* and becomes a celebrity in Paris. Rousseau writes his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, in* 1754.He then returns to Geneva, converts back to Calvinism and reclaims the status of 'Citizen of the free state of Geneva'. In 1755 Rousseau publishes his Second Discourse, *the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality.* He works on *Emile*, his reflections on an ideal education in 1756. Rousseau also begins writing *The Social Contract*. In 1762 Rousseau publishes *The Social*

Contract and *Emile: or, On Education*. *Emile,* disturb both the Parliament and the Church in France, an order for his arrest is issued, and he flees to Switzerland.

From 1762–1770 Rousseau travels from place to place, hoping to find asylum, still preoccupied with grievances against his friends. The city of Geneva refuses him asylum because for his political and religious ideas. In 1762 he moves to Motiers near Neufchatel, territory of the King of Prussia. For a year and a half his life is relatively calm. The order for his arrest is almost rescinded when Voltaire intervenes against him. He publishes *Letters Written from the Mountain,* attacking Voltaire, in 1764.Thus, in 1765 Voltaire calls for Rousseau's death. Rousseau's house in Motiers is stoned, and he flees. He spends a few happy weeks on the island of Saint-Pierre in the Bienne Lake. He goes to Strasbourg, then to Paris. He suffers from a variety of psychological ailments. Rousseau in 1766 accepts the invitation of the English political philosopher David Hume to stay in England and later Rousseau breaks off with Hume.

From 1767–1769 Rousseau returns to France; he wanders clandestinely from place to place, finally in 1770–1771 After eight years of wandering, Rousseau moves to Paris, where he lives in poverty. He finishes writing his groundbreaking *Confessions*. In 1772 Dissatisfied with his *Confessions* and preoccupied with justifying and explaining himself, he begins writing *Dialogues: Rousseau Judge of Jean-Jacques*. He dies on 2 July 1778, five days after his sixty-sixth birthday.

Rousseau on Society and the Individual

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the strangest, and one of the most intelligent, men of the eighteenth century—of any century. He said himself that he was a man of paradoxes, and several of his most important works begin, famously, with paradoxes. *The Social Contract:* ''Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains.'' *Emile:* ''Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.'' No one has argued more strongly than Rousseau that human nature is fundamentally individualistic, yet no one has more clearly seen what humans owe to society. According to him society is what makes us fully human and society is what debases us below our natural state. Rousseau has a story to tell which explains how all this came to be; it is a very complex story, so complex that scholars continue to disagree about how to interpret it. Yet it is a story which is still very much part of the self-understanding of the modern world. We have much to learn from it, not only about Rousseau, but about ourselves, who are, more than we are aware, still under his influence.

Many have noted that Rousseau was born and raised a Protestant in Calvin's city, Geneva. His Deism distanced him from the Protestant and Catholic churches alike, but his sympathies1 and perhaps the inner structure of his thought had a Protestant cast. Charles Taylor (1989) has argued that Rousseau's contrast

between that which is good from the hands of God and the evil men have made of it brought an Augustinian, even a hyper-Augustinian, strand into eighteenth-century thought,and we should remember that Augustine was the church father who had the greatest influence on Protestantism.

Rousseau's pessimism about human progress in history was surely one of the reasons for his alienation from the literary and philosophical circles of his day. Those thinkers who were determined to erase the infamy of Christian superstition were not happy to see its shadow reappearing in one of their own. It is commonly held that Rousseau, along with many eighteenth-century thinkers, believed that human nature is basically good, that he rejected the idea of original sin, and Rousseau himself said as much. But on closer inspection Rousseau's view of human nature is perhaps closer to that of orthodox Christianity, especially Protestantism, than is usually recognized (White, 2010).

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were not evil—they hadn't sinned. From the hand of God they were, like all of creation, good. It was their own action, their own sin, which brought about the fall and distorted all subsequent human nature, so in this sense sin is not original (White, 2010). Human nature for Rousseau is good only in the state of nature, before the beginning of society. It was the human creation of society, with all its attendant vices, that began the fatal process of human distortion and degeneration. Further, human beings for Rousseau may regain something like their natural freedom if they enter the social contract and gain civil freedom, or if they as individuals attain moral freedom. For Rousseau man in the state of nature is solitary, without language or culture, satisfied with meeting only his simplest biological needs, in short, little different from non-human animals. But entering society brings dramatic changes. In Chapter 8 of Book 1 of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau puts it succinctly:

> The transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting in his behaviour justice for instinct, and by imbuing his actions with a moral quality they previously lacked. Only when the voice of duty prevails over physical impulse, and law prevails over appetite, does man, who until then was preoccupied only with himself, understand that he must act according to other principles, and must consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although, in this state, he gives up many advantages that he derives from nature, he acquires equally great ones in return; his faculties are used and developed; his ideas are expanded; his feelings are ennobled; his entire soul is raised to such a degree that, if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him below that from which he emerged, he ought to bless continually the wonderful moment

> that released him from it forever, and transformed him from a stupid, limited animal into an intelligent being and a man.

Although he sometimes, as in the above quotation, describes the shift from the state of nature to the civil state as occurring in a single jump, at other times, especially in the Second *Discourse,* he describes the transition as more gradual, with several intermediary stages which Jean Starobinski (1988), a leading French specialist on Rousseau, has described in some detail.

Rousseau's Social Contract

Rousseau wrote his *Second Discourse* in response to an essay contest sponsored by the academy of Dijon. In it he described the historical process by which man began in a State of Nature and over time 'progressed' into civil society. *According* to *Rousseau, the State* of *Nature* was a peaceful and quixotic time. People lived solitary, uncomplicated lives. Their few needs were easily satisfied by nature. Due to the abundance of nature and the small size of the population, competition was non-existent, and persons rarely even saw one another, much less had reason for conflict or fear. Moreover, these simple, morally pure persons were naturally endowed with the capacity for pity, and therefore were not inclined to do harm to one another.

As time passed, however, humanity faced certain changes. As the overall population increased, the means by which people could satisfy their needs had to change. People slowly began to live together in small families, and then in small communities. Divisions of labour were introduced, both within and between families, and discoveries and inventions made life easier, giving rise to leisure time. Such leisure time inevitably led people to make comparisons between themselves and others, resulting in public values, leading to shame and envy, pride and contempt. Most importantly was the *invention of private* property, which constituted the pivotal moment in humanity's evolution out of a simple, pure state into one characterized by greed, competition, vanity, inequality, and vice. For Rousseau the invention of property constitutes humanity's 'fall from grace' out of the State of Nature (Damrosch, 2005).

The Social Contract begins with the most often quoted line from Rousseau: "Man was born free, and he is everywherein chains" (Rawls, 1995). This claim is the conceptual bridge between the descriptive work of the Second Discourse, and the prescriptive work that was to come. Humans are essentially free, and were free in the State of Nature, but the 'progress' of civilization has substituted subservience to others for that freedom, through dependence, economic and social inequalities, and the extent to which we judge ourselves through comparisons with others. Since a return to the State of Nature is neither feasible nor desirable, the purpose of politics is to restore freedom to us, thereby reconciling who we truly and essentially are with how we live together. So, this is the fundamental

philosophical problem that *The Social Contract* seeks to address: how can we be free and live together? Or, put in another way, "how can we live together without succumbing to the force and coercion of others"? We can do so, Rousseau maintains, by submitting our individual, particular wills to the collective or general will, created through agreement with other free and equal persons. Like Hobbes and Locke before him, and in contrast to the ancient philosophers, all men are made by nature to be equal, therefore no one has a natural right to govern others, and therefore the only justified authority is the authority that is generated out of agreements or covenants.

The most basic covenant, the social pact, is the agreement to come together and form a people, a collectivity, which by definition is more than and different from a mere aggregation of individual interests and wills. This act, where individual persons become a people is "the real foundation of society". Through the collective renunciation of the individual rights and freedom that one has in the State of Nature, and the transfer of these rights to the collective body, a new 'person', as it were. is formed. The sovereign is thus formed when free and equal persons come together and agree to create themselves anew as a single body, directed to the good of all considered together. So, just as individual wills are directed towards individual interests, *the general* will, once formed, is directed towards the common good, understood and agreed to collectively. Included in this version of the social contract is the idea óf reciprocated duties: the sovereign is committed to the good of the individuals who constitute it, and each individual is likewise committed to the good of the whole. Given this, individuals cannot be given liberty to decide whether it is in their own interest to fulfill their duties to the Sovereign, while at the same time being allowed to reap the benefits of citizenship. They must be made to conform themselves to the general will, they must be “forced to be free (Damrosch, 2005).

For Rousseau, this implies an extremely strong and direct form of democracy. One cannot transfer one's will to another, to do with as he or she sees fit, as one does in representative democracies. Rather, the general will depends on the coming together periodically of the entire democratic body, each and every citizen, to decide collectively, and with at least near unanimity, how to live together, i.e., what laws to enact. As it is constituted only by individual wills, these private, individual wills must assemble themselves regularly if the general will is to continue. One implication of this is that the strong form of democracy which is consistent with the general will is also only possible in relatively small states. The people must be able to identify with one another. Although the conditions to true democracy are stringent, they are also the only means by which we can, according to Rousseau save our selves and regain the freedom to which we are naturally entitled (Reed & Johnson, 2000).

The use of controversies or conflicts in education has a long conceptual tradition but marginal application in education known as *teaching controversial issues*

(Neil, 2013; Kötter, 2018; Wilkerson, 2017). It is applied mainly in secondary or high school education, in social studies or related 'educations', such as peace education, environmental education, human rights education, citizenship education and democratic education (Council of Europe, 2015). There has been an ongoing debate, over the past two decades, particularly in democratic education, between those who opt for a so-called *deliberative democratic education* approach (like Rawls and Gutmann) compared to proponents of an *agonistic democratic education* approach (like Mouffe and Laclau). Like most authors (Lozano Parra et al., 2021), the chapter seem to have a preference for the latter. However, it is in the former that Rousseau's social contract has much meaning and relevance. Additionally, like Koutsouris et al. (2021), argued large number of selected papers on democratic education, that 'agonism' is discussed in the educational literature mainly from a theoretical point of view' and the use of 'agonistic principles as a tool to help teachers, school leaders, and policymakers … is currently lacking in the literature' (p. 1049).

This chapter discusses the controversies or conflicts over issues in higher education and underscoring the Rousseau social contract in reconciling the controversies.

Autonomy and Dependence: Conflicting Issues

Liberationists and Paternalists, with opposing principles on child-rearing, are divided into two distinct and polarity groups. Respect for freedom, non-interference and self-determination is the major claim of the liberationists, leading to states of autonomy and independent thinking among children. Paternalists on the other hand will argue that children are not as competent, rational, or as matured as adults in general and, therefore, should not be treated as autonomous and independent thinkers, instead, they respect protective measures of care and obligations. The philosophy that' admits children have a right to care and protection but that they do not have a right to self-determination. As Archard, thinks that self-determination is too important to be left to children" (Archard, 1993) He therefore assumes a right to intervene in matters which require the making of sensible informed decisions relating to children's lives, and children are restricted in exercising autonomy until considered competent to make such decisions on their own behalf.

Should education be directed towards the good of the pupil alone? Few think so. There is the good of society to be considered, too, whether one has in mind economic goals or the pupil's moral obligations. While not neglecting these, parents, teachers and educationalists have tended of late to put pupil-centred objectives in the centre of things. Is this justifiable? What pattern of priorities should there be among competing aims? The position however denies children the opportunity to defend their position as competent members of society. The caretaker thesis assumes a position of authority and justifies proceedings as being in children's best interests. The choices of the adult for children are therefore

justified as better choices by a criterion of competence. The Principles of autonomy and paternalism feature strongly in the duties of parenthood and how they evaluate the child's competence. However, contingencies deny consistency in competences and whether in children or adults, neither complete competence nor complete incompetence features in their capacity to think autonomously and take informed decisions. Adults may know better than children because of longer years of experience, but sometimes a child shows greater wisdom than that shown by an adult.

Generally, children are eager to be considered competent and enthusiastically seek for independence. Margaret Donaldson claims that "there is fundamental human urge to be effective, competent and independent, to understand the world and to act with skill", but, she says, "in some ways we do not encourage competence." (Donaldson, 1978) Children are forced into dependence as contended by John Holt. (Holt, 1974) Dependence is not only an acceptable state of affairs within the family circle but is a necessary one. Choices may be better or worse as regards meeting needs, wants and desires in respect of those affected by the chooser's choice, not just in respect of the chooser. These choices are regulated by policies which may intermingle with tension between love and respect and between dependence and autonomy (O'Neill, 1989).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau regarded dependence as a form of weakness, and claimed that "man is made sociable by his weakness ... " (Rousseau, 1916) on the other hand John Dewey had the opposite view and saw dependence as a form of social coherence, which he argue from a social standpoint, claiming that dependence denotes a power rather than weakness; it involves independence. However from the traditionalist perspectives, there is a constant risk that a person's capacity for social interaction will decline as their level of independence rises. Meaning to say, by making him more independent, it can likewise render him more self-sufficient, which could cause him to become distant and indifferent because it would make him so perceptive in how he interacts with others and give him the impression that he can stand and act alone. (Dewey, 1916) Dewey believes that, dependence on other people need not engender helplessness nor lack of self-esteem. This can be recognised as a truism when the Principle of Respect for Persons which includes care and protection in respect of all human beings, young and old is considered.

According to Kant (cited in Clegg, 2001), the only way individuals can develop as mature persons is to use the power of autonomy granted to them as rational beings. A self-incurred immaturity results when one prefers not to think for oneself but relies on guidance from others. However, according to him, emergence from a state of immaturity is dependent on a certain kind of freedom: one cannot achieve maturity whilst one is discouraged from thinking for oneself. It appears that immaturity cannot be regarded as self-incurred when authoritative measures are taken to intercept this freedom. In this case, immaturity is inflicted on children by those whose authoritarian views lead them to think for children

rather than with them (ibid, p.152). Since choices, discussions, decisions, reflections, judgements, and other activities that are necessary for exercising autonomy are to provide the justification for one's thoughts and actions.

Dearden appears to presume the conceptual relationship between autonomy and rationality. The rationalistic model of autonomy might therefore be used to describe his idea of autonomy (Dearden, cited in Yoo, 1999, p. 25). If we want autonomy as an educational goal, it should be quite evident that we need to have a knowledge concerning the methods, curricula, and organisational patterns which will best promote it (ibid). Early papers by White and Dearden are the best place to go for the claims of the rationalistic model of autonomy and its underlying educational claim is.

Economic aims and pupil-centred aims: The conflicting Aims

The education system is sometimes treated, especially by politicians, partly as a means of maintaining or improving the economic life of the country, by helping to provide the kinds of workers required in different sectors and equipped with the right kinds of qualifications, abilities and attitudes. This aim is often at odds with pupil-centred aims, not least with the kind of other positive aims. This aim expands the pupil's horizons, seeks to make him master of his destiny: but an economy-centred education may well try to restrict his expectations, trim them down so that he fits as neatly as possible into an occupational role. The conflict can become especially acute if one remembers just how many millions of jobs in our kind of 'advanced' industrial society are pretty unattractive, not at all the sort of thing which anyone would be likely to include as a permanent part of his life-plan if he had a full choice of alternatives. These include not only dirty, arduous or dangerous jobs like mining, road-repairing or humping bags of fertiliser, but also the tediously repetitive and mechanical jobs produced by extreme division of labour through technological advances, like work on an assembly track or at a supermarket check-out or, increasingly, in offices (Susan, 2002).

The economic aim can conflict with the positive pupil-centred aim in different ways. First in the kind of knowledge and understanding it requires. The pupil-centred aim demands a very broad understanding of varied ends, means to ends and so on. The economic aim demands only what is necessary to a particular kind of job or range of jobs. For some jobs it demands specialists who know a good deal about such things as mechanical engineering, marine biology, industrial psychology etc., but it provides no reason why they should know anything else. For those jobs—the majority—which require little or no specialized knowledge which cannot be picked up in a few days or weeks at work, it demands very little knowledge. A basic literacy and numeracy are all that are necessary: the more an individual attains beyond this point the more his widened horizons may make him *dissatisfied* with the tedious job he will have to do.

The two aims also conflict over the dispositions they encourage. The pupil-centred aim promotes reflectiveness, the economic, at least in the familiar form now under consideration, a ready obedience to authority. Considered only as units of labour in industrial and other enterprises as we currently know them, workers do not need to reflect on the rights and wrongs of what they are asked to do. Reflection, too, may breed dissatisfaction and the smooth running of the company may suffer. This is why economically oriented controllers of educational systems often put such a price on the pupils' bowing to the authority of their teachers and favour authoritarian structures in school organisation. It also explains why they like the rote-learning of such subjects as arithmetic and foreign languages. Those who train army recruits know the value of drill in breaking men in, in getting them to do things to order and without question. Rote-learning in school can be used for the same purpose. But the most important way in which the two aims differ is this. The pupil-centred aim requires that the pupil himself internalises the aim, sees it and accepts it for what it is. He cannot become an autonomous planner of his own life without coming, perhaps gradually, to know that this is what his educators are aiming at for him, and without accepting it as what he wants. But this is not at all necessary to the economic aim. That the pupil knows and accepts the aim of maintaining or improving the economy is not a part of the aim itself: it is enough that he is equipped for and has the approved attitudes towards a job in a particular sector of that economy. For reasons just stated, it may well indeed be *counterproductive* to let him in on the aims of his education. If he knows, he may resist. He may not want to be steered into a meaningless job or welcome the limiting of horizons which specialisation can bring. His ignorance can give his educators more scope to win his compliance by stealth. What can one do in the face of this conflict of aims?

One can be an ostrich and try to ignore it. One way is by fixing up one's concept of education in such a way that the conflict doesn't arise. Education is defined as something with only intrinsic aims, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, for instance. Economic aims must therefore fall outside it. The educator as educator has nothing to do with them. Other concepts come into play here: *training* in specific skills for specific ends, and *socialization* into the mores expected in the work-place. But training and socialisation fall outside the province of education.

Another response to the conflict is *compromise,* the 'render unto Caesar' approach. For example some primary teachers' views on aims tend to lie on a continuum. At one extreme teachers believe that 'education is the means used by society… to ensure that new generations will maintain it both practically and ideologically' by rating 'as most important aims dealing with the basic skills and with conventionally acceptable social behaviour' (White, 2010). At the other extreme 'is the view that education is a personal service to the individual'. Here the aims thought most important are 'concerned with developing independence,

both emotional and intellectual, and with a much broader educational front, including art, music, movement, drama, and so on' Some teachers, are exclusively attached to one of the extreme positions. But the great majority hold both position to some extent with differing emphases.
The tension described is immediately recognisable. So, too, is the compromise which many teachers seem to settle for, i.e. to pay a certain amount of attention to basic skills and in the rest of the time to foster the child's personal development by allowing him plenty of choice among *activities,* especially creative activities; a regime, for instance, of reading and sums in the morning, 'choosing time' in the afternoon.

According to White, who was cited by Yoo (1999, p. 260) a central educational goal should be to nurture students who think independently for themselves, those who rely on reason instead of authority to support their points of view, and those who, precisely because they think independently for themselves, creating out their own life plan in accordance with their own knowledge, without being influenced by the opinions of the people around them. Their reasoning appears to be as follows: autonomy can only be exercised if a person has the skills necessary to think and act in accordance with their own mental activity.

Rousseau and Conflicts in Education

In many places, the modern reader may experience considerable sympathy with Rousseau's eloquently formulated sentences, which take into account the uniqueness of the child and call for autonomy and independence, freed from constricting conventions, traditions and regulations on how to live. The plea for natural development is recognisable, and it is desirable to allow a person's individuality or identity to develop in an authentic way (Doorman, 2013). But, unfortunately, appearances can be deceptive. The intended freedom and autonomy, via dislocation to the countryside, are minutely controlled and eliminated all possible social and emotional experiences that could influence the child – his parents, brother, sisters and friends; his desires, wants, imagination and sexuality – to maintain totalitarian control over the process of growth of this pupil in a *natural setting.* A nearly 'Skinnerian' education in a laboratory called *nature*. It is not only the environment that is controlled, but also the child's experiences, thinking and feelings. There is no question of the free development of the individual, contrary to what one would expect. The accursed and corrupted society has been replaced by an idealised idea of nature by Rousseau as a teacher, who equally unfree (Pouwels, 2023).

Rousseau's implicit teaching practice can be seen as a form of independent, individual learning, mainly from within, under the continuous guidance of an 'expert' supervisor who decides when the child is ready to learn and what the child will have to learn. It can be seen as a plea, a beginning of *professionalism* in education. The educational interaction concerns almost exclusively the interaction

between supervisor and pupil. There seems to be no 'other's' world. Rousseau (1921, II) asks the reader not to view childhood as a phase, a hurdle to be overcome, but rather to consider that time as extremely valuable in and of itself: 'Love childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts' (p. 43). From this, he concludes that the most important rule of upbringing and education is to 'lose time' instead of gaining time, to give the child 'childhood', because 'The most dangerous life span is that from birth to the twelfth year. That is the time when all errors and vices sprout, while the instrument to eradicate them does not yet exist' (Rousseau, 1921, p. 57).

Rousseau's contribution to pedagogy, is to unfold the powers of children in due proportion to their age; not to transcend their ability; to arouse in them the sense of the observer and of the pioneer; to make them discoverers rather than imitators; to teach them accountability to themselves and not slavish dependence upon the words of others.

The legacy of Rousseau can or must be related to the so-called *culture of fear* that seems to run through our societies (Furedi, 2018). More precisely, to an overwhelming call for prevention and safety in society, known as the *surveillance and preventive state*, with negative consequences, such as the increase of surveillance, monitoring and screening; the early diagnosis and intervention; the intervention by risk instead of crime and the irreversibility of established rules and laws; and the loss of freedom (Peeters, 2013). Can this desire, this call, be traced to the way that Rousseau conceptualised or even demonized *society* as opposed to *nature*? The desire for public safety, protection and trigger warnings for almost every hurdle that we might face in life and for avoiding any kind of struggle or conflict often brings more misery than engaging in proper confrontation (Achterhuis and Koning, 2014, p. 44). Practising *robust counter speech* instead of *censorship* (law making) is a much better way to empower disparaged people than censoring *hate speech*, which is ineffective at best and counter-productive at worst (Strossen, 2018, p. 139). In education, Biesta criticises the increased emphasis on certainty and control in contemporary educational legislation. 'They [the policy makers, politicians, popular press, public and international organisations] want education to be strong, secure and predictable, and want it to be risk-free at all levels' (Biesta, 2014, p. 1). This may result in the education of 'snowflakes', who call for trigger warnings, unable to endure even the slightest push without going completely off track (Essig, 2014). This fear of conflict might also explain the often tame quality of so many textbooks and curricula.

Rousseau's philosophy of education could be regarded as the root of our fear of dealing with conflicts in life and in education. The common fear of conflict in private and social life is of course understandable, but Rousseau's educational philosophy may have cast the preoccupation with the avoidance, isolation and

postponing of conflict, making both society and education extremely sensitive and afraid of interesting intellectual disagreements between opponents. The Chantal Mouffe (2008) has argued the idea of the struggle and fight over competing ideas and practices in what is called the *agonistic democratic* model – 'the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, but to mobilize these passions towards democratic designs' (Ruitenberg, 2009, p. 272). Quite the opposite of Rousseau, who practised an infinitive avoidance in splendid isolation, to avoid, postpone or control passions. Rousseau's pedagogy is perhaps a deliberate anti-social pedagogy, and its features might be fundamental to the way we look at society. In a way that we are denying its dynamic and thriving nature, by believing at least in education and schools if not also in a society a harmonious illusion in a society where everyone agrees with everyone . However, 'a society without conflicts would not be a society, but a wax museum or a cemetery' (Savater, 1998, p. 15).But the 'The expression of contrasting opinions in learning groups was the single most important predictor of learning gain' (Johnson, 2015, pp. 88–9).

One must therefore recognise and acknowledge the *power of conflicts* for the vitality of our democracy and democratic education. Mouffe (2008), known for her *agonistic pluralism*, advocates an agonistic democratic education, mainly because the central ideas of neutrality, rationally and especially consensus do not resonate with the idea of facing conflicts. Ruitenberg (2009) and Mouffe (2008) criticise the liberal democratic models with their emphasis on individuality and rationality, failing to appreciate emotions and the social 'need for collective identifications which will never disappear since it is constitutive of the mode of existence of human beings. The prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public but to mobilize these passions towards democratic designs' (p. 272).

Drawing implications from the Rousseau's social contract, there should be *democratic designs in education*, dealing with *conflicts in education* by creating, a curriculum, a teaching method and a risk-accommodating environment where leadership against the grain can be exercised. Of course, we need skilled teachers for that. Schools and higher education environments are excellent places, if well organised, to use contrasting opinions about life and to learn and deal with all the competing and conflicting ideas that we encounter in relation to the natural, social and emotional world (Baker et al., 2013). Rousseau's social contract would be so relevant to this final statement.

Conclusion

Rousseau's writings and publications were mostly in support of indivisualistic views to conflict in the society and education, as clearly demonstrated in his books like 'Emile', 'On Education', etc. These are centrally concerned with the individual interest and focused on individual aims of education. However, man as

social being can't live in isolation, particularly in the current educational, technological and political dispensation, where the entire world is considered as a global village. This is a great challenge to the achievement and practice of Rousseau's advocated individually centred aims of education in a natural environment, due to conflicting individual and societal aims of education. In the sense, Rousseau's social contract is argued to be relevant in approaching and handling the contrasting and conflicting aims. The chapter argues for deliberative democratic education in line with the social contract principles of reconciling the societal general aims of education and conflicting individual aims by taking into account the representative views, interests and aims of the represented constituents.

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