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**TOPIC OF ASSIGNMENT : PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF DEWEY**

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**COURSE : DIPLOMA IN  
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# Philosophical ideas of John Dewey



# General Information

- ▶ John Dewey, (born: Oct. 20, 1859, Burlington , died : June 1, 1952, New York. ) American philosopher and educator who was a founder of the philosophical movement known as pragmatism, a pioneer in functional psychology, and a leader of the progressive movement in education in the United States.
- ▶ He was the third of the couple's four sons, one of whom died as an infant. Dewey's mother, the daughter of a wealthy farmer, was a devout Calvinist. His father, a merchant, left his grocery business to become a Union Army soldier in the civil war . Dewey's father was known to share his passion for British literature with his offspring. After the war, Archibald became the proprietor of a successful tobacco shop, affording the family a comfortable life and financial stability.
- ▶ By 1894 Dewey was made head of the philosophy department at the University of Chicago. He remained at the University of Chicago until 1904, also serving as director of its School of Education for two years.
- ▶ Dewey left Chicago in 1904 to join the Ivy League, becoming a professor of philosophy at Columbia University while working at Teachers College on the side.
- ▶ In 1930, Dewey left Columbia and retired from his teaching career with the title of professor emeritus. His wife, Harriet, had died three years earlier.

- ▶ Dewey's philosophical treatises were at first inspired by his reading of philosopher and psychologist William James' writing. Dewey's philosophy, known as experimentalism, or instrumentalism, largely centered on human experience. Rejecting the more rigid ideas of Transcendentalism to which Dewey had been exposed in academia, it viewed ideas as tools for experimenting, with the goal of improving the human experience.
- ▶ Dewey's philosophy also claimed that man behaved out of habit and that change often led to unexpected outcomes. As man struggled to understand the results of change, he was forced to think creatively in order to resume control of his shifting environment. For Dewey, thought was the means through which man came to understand and connect with the world around him. A universal education was the key to teaching people how to abandon their habits and think creatively.

# Aims of education

- ▶ The aim of education, according to Dewey, should be to create a balance between theoretical and practical activities. He has stressed equal importance to both action and thought. These two should go hand-in-hand. Practical side is no doubt, very important but the theoretical side, at the same time, should not be ignored.
- ▶ Dewey considered life as changeable. He argued that there cannot be any unchangeable aims of changeable life. Therefore, there cannot be any predetermined aims of education. But he himself has mentioned three aims of education-
  1. deconstruction of experiences and capability to adjust with the society
  2. envelopment of social efficiency
  3. training in democratic life
- ▶ And in these three aims, almost all aims of education are included, such as physical development, mental development, social and cultural development, moral and character development, vocational development and education for democracy. Only, spiritual development of man has not been included.

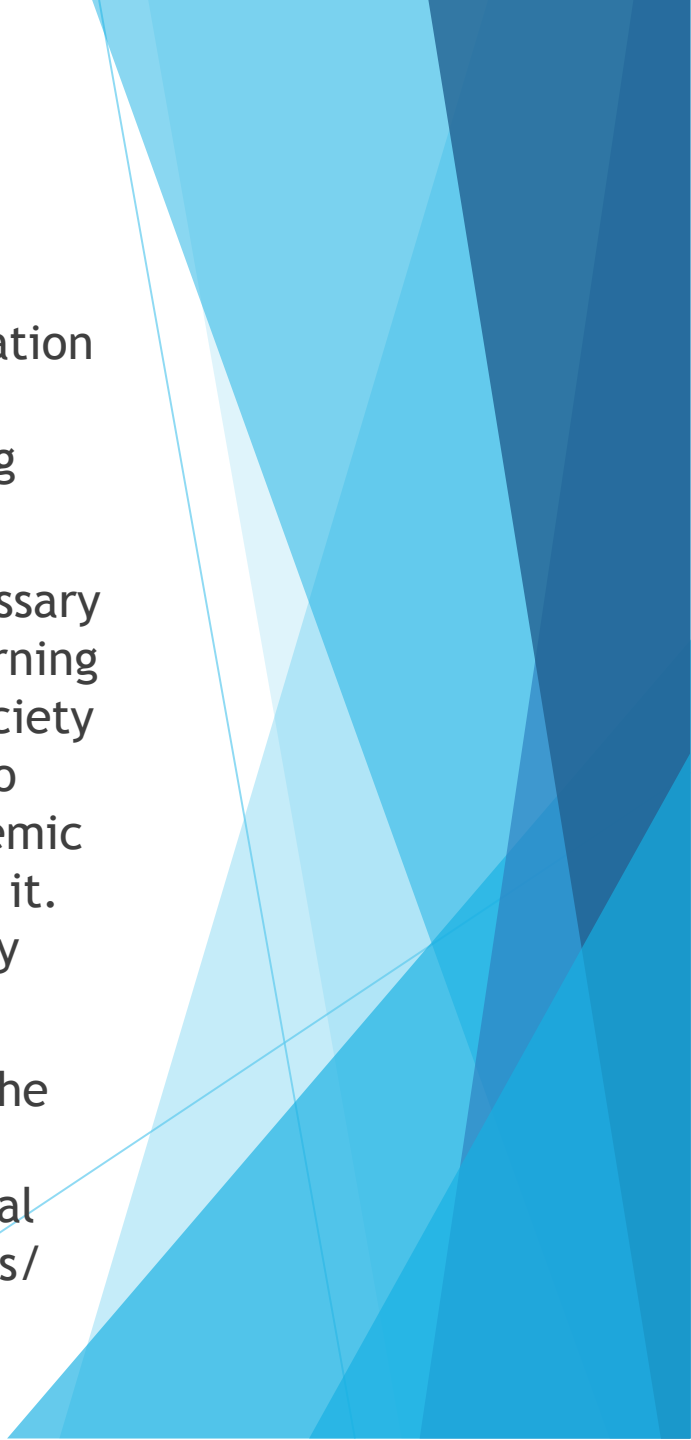
- ▶ Dewey does not want to determine any aims of education and on the other talks about training in democracy. These are mutually contradictory.
- ▶ The aims of education for any society or country should be determined. Formal education cannot be arranged in the absence of definite aims. It is natural to effect changes to them with time.
- ▶ It has been done and will continue to be done. Most of the countries had monarchy or aristocracy in the past, so it was taught then and blind followers to the state were created; today most of the countries have democratic system in which democratic education is imparted and cautious patriots are prepared.
- ▶ According to John Dewey, the development of social efficiency is one of the aims of education.
- ▶ To him, school is a social institution. The school should be organized in such a way that the activities of the outer world are reflected.
- ▶ Dewey formulated “social efficiency” as aim of education in view of the changing tenor of society. This change has been brought by the application of science to the means of production and distribution, by the rise of great manufacturing centers and by the rapid growth of means of communication. The school must take cognizance of these changes to fit the child in this changed situation in an effective manner.

# Curriculum

- ▶ John Dewey's Curriculum Theory John Dewey felt that the curriculum should ultimately produce students who would be able to deal effectively with the modern world. Therefore, curriculum should not be presented as finished abstractions, but should include the child's preconceptions and should incorporate how the child views his or her own world.
- ▶ Dewey has not prepared any outline for the curriculum of education. In this regard, he argued that how can an unchangeable curriculum be made for a changeable society. But he has developed the principles of curriculum construction- principle of interest, principle of utility, principle of activity, principle of correlation and principle of flexibility.
- ▶ Today the curriculum in any country is prepared on the basis of these principles. We remain indebted to John Dewey in this field. But we do not agree with Dewey that religion and morality have no utility in practical life, so they should not be given any place in the curriculum. Our own experience goes that by abiding religion and morality, material life of man also goes on peacefully and happily and he gets spiritual peace.



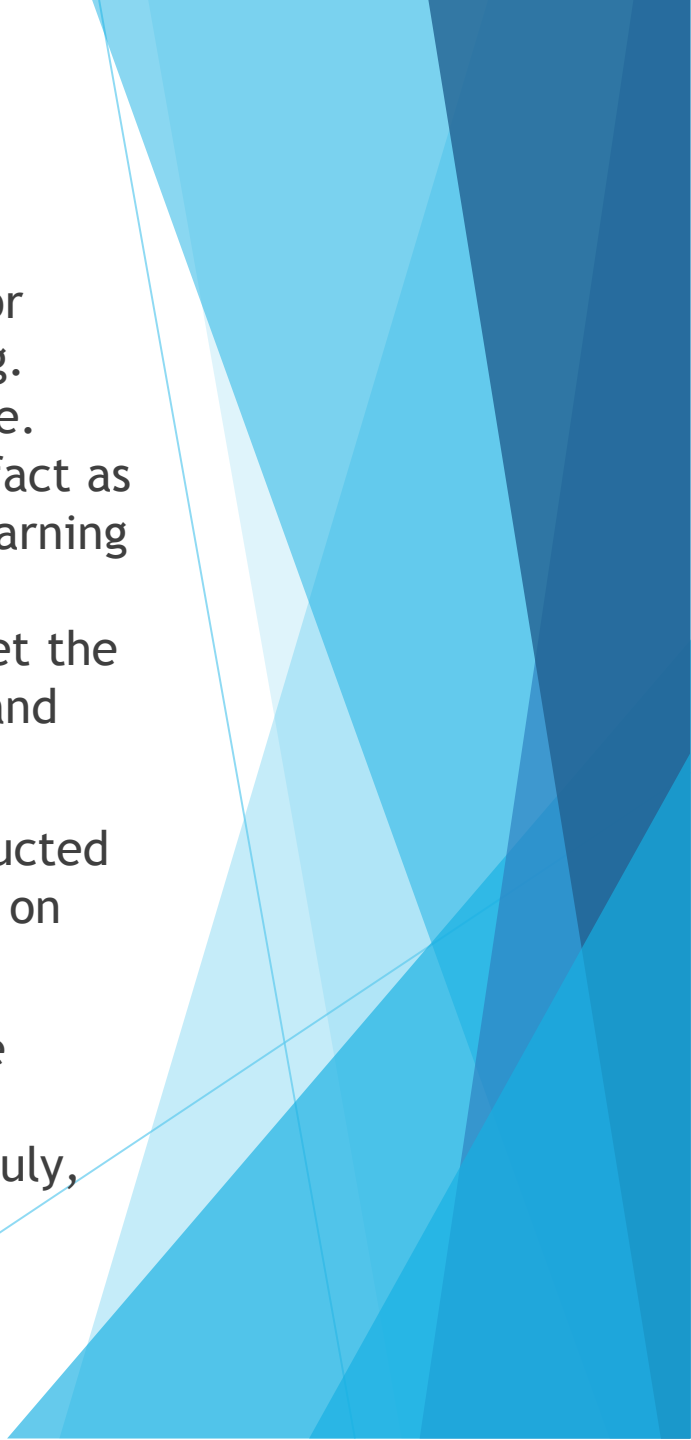
- ▶ From what we have seen, Dewey, at least in part, sees the curriculum as "the child's present experience" and "the subject-matter of studies" . The former notes the early steps in our understanding the world and the latter the more developed understanding that is involved in formal inquiry. But he says more on the topic, emphasizing "the attitudes, the motives, and the interests" involved in knowledge development and the outcome of the maturing, developing "adult mind" .
- ▶ John Dewey's book 'The Child and the Curriculum' was published in the year 1902. In his book, Dewey has emphasized child-centered education and considered child's efforts and his experiential knowledge to be most important for his all-round development. He also considered social perspectives useful for the development of child's education.
- ▶ In this book, special attention has been paid to develop the framework of curriculum according to both child and community centered education. Dewey considers it necessary for the students to learn by self-activities than learning through school subjects and therefore curriculum should be designed accordingly.

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- ▶ 1. Integrated Structure : The curriculum outline should be based on integrated structure. To fulfil goals of life, the curriculum should have an integrated combination for the development of social, moral, educational, biological aspects. Inclusion of various facts, subjects, ideas and bases in the curriculum provides it an integrating form.
  - ▶ 2. Flexibility : In order to keep up the pace with the progress of society it is necessary to develop the curriculum and educational goals accordingly. Flexibility in the learning process and educational objectives is useful for teacher, students, community, society everyone. The principle of 'Progressive Education' is also based on the initiative to tailor the curriculum according to the situation. Due to the flexibility of the academic methods and curriculum, it can be reformed anytime as per the needs to recreate it. The flexibility of the course and curriculum can prove to be important for the daily educational needs of the children.
  - ▶ 3. Utility-Based : The curriculum should be developed according to the needs of the child. Adopting a Pragmatist approach in his book 'The Child and the Curriculum' Dewey explained that curriculum and education should be developed to meet social and personal needs. The utilitarian aim of curriculum should prepare a child for his/her upcoming life.


- ▶ 4. Socially-Efficient : Dewey considered that the curriculum should be designed to make the child socially efficient. The working of the school should be in line with the development of social values and moral base. Dewey calls school as a miniature of society and supports the thought of developing the child's abilities in accordance with society and making himself socially efficient in life.
- ▶ According to Dewey, an ideal curriculum must meet the child on his own terms. It should provide him with the opportunity to explore experience and connect relevant information leading to learning the abstract principles and constructing the worldview, which should be the eventual goal of the curriculum. While espousing his theory, Dewey also reflects on the broader subjects of the anthropological, psychological and societal aspects of education.

# Method of teaching

- ▶ Dewey discarded all these aims of education. He puts forward his aims of education in the light of the rapid social and economic changes in the world – particularly in America.
- ▶ Dewey does not believe in an ultimate aim of education. He provides no fixed and final goal of education. He always speaks of immediate or proximate aims. To him education is experience which is subject to constant change with the changing pattern of life. The process of education is a continuous process of adjustment. The individual has always to adjust and re-adjust himself to the environment.
- ▶ Dewey agrees to the function of education as preparation for life, if it refers to life now and the immediate future.
- ▶ Pupils, he said, are not interested in the distant or remote future. Any such attempt would not stimulate them to learn. Education should ensure adequate preparation for immediate life. This will encourage the pupil to learn.
- ▶ Dewey also agrees with the aim of education as self-realization of the individual.

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- ▶ has revealed several facts about learning. First, social environment is necessary for learning. Second, learning process begins when the learner has interest in learning. Third, children take interest in learning that which is concerned with their real life. Fourth, a child learns when he is active to learn. And fifth, the children take any fact as a whole. From this view, Dewey laid most emphasis on the development of real learning circumstances and learning by doing and self-experience. From this view, the experimental method is the best method of teaching-learning; in it the children get the opportunities of observation, activity, self-experience, reasoning, generalization and testing.
  - ▶ On the basis of the above teaching principles of Dewey, his pupil Kilpatrick constructed the project method. The new methods of teaching, such as Dalton, are also based on Dewey's teaching principles.
  - ▶ At one time, these teaching principles were very popular, but now more effective teaching methods have been developed. Social environment, that is, interaction between teacher and student has been given the most importance for learning. Truly, Dewey has contributed much in this field.

- ▶ 1. Learning by Doing : The popular idea of Dewey is that the child should be given freedom to work. He learns more efficiently by performing tasks by his own efforts. Learning which is achieved through doing is long-lasting. Learning by doing strengthen the child physically, mentally and psychologically. The reason for this is that he attains self- confidence, mental satisfaction and peace through self-efforts.
- ▶ 2. Experience Based Learning : John Dewey says, “We do not learn from experiences .... We learn from reflecting on experiences.” Teachers should work on providing opportunities to children to learn from the real-world experiences and through environment by coming in direct contact with one’s own environment. For this teacher should provide experience-based learning by encouraging their ideas and thought process in the classroom.
- ▶ 3. Learning by Experiment : Dewey’s ‘Pragmatism’ emphasizes on creating learning opportunities involving testing and experimentation in teaching methodologies. In order to solve problems, the teacher should motivate the child to use methods of experimentation and investigations by giving him freedom in the teaching-learning process.
- ▶ 4. Student Centered Learning Approach : The development of child can be done according to his needs and abilities by making education and teaching method child-centered. Dewey has always placed children at first place in the education system. The learner- centered teaching and learning methods help the teachers to understand the psychological state of the learner beforehand. Student-centered learning techniques contribute significantly in the all-round development of the child’s personality.

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- ▶ 5. Purposive Learning : Learning which serves the purposes in child's life is more useful. Purposive learning also helps the individual to adjust to his social environment. Purposive learning in the teaching method keeps the needs of the child at the center. The purposive method understands the learners' interests and works to make their experiences enriching.
  - ▶ Dewey was a great advocate of progressive education, and his theories are still relevant and important in today's classrooms. If you're a teacher, using Dewey's theories helps improve your students' experiences in the classroom. Students will learn to participate actively and develop personal interest in the classroom lessons, becoming lifelong learners.

# Role of teacher

- ▶ According to Dewey, teachers have a responsibility to structure educational environments in ways that promote educative learning experiences, those that change the learner in such a way as to promote continued learning and growth.
- ▶ Learning was essential for the continuation of society, which would make the job of the teacher pretty significant. Pragmatists believe that people learn through informal processes, but these processes must have a purpose and a flexible plan of action.
- ▶ The teacher's job is to provide an open ended opportunity for study in an environment that allows the child to think and act intelligently in order to test ideas and skills. All children do not learn in the same way or at the same rate, so teachers are the guides to the learning process, which meets children at their level of ability.
- ▶ In that respect teachers must have sufficient knowledge of a subject to be able to break it down into parts for students to study, and they must be able to link the learning to a motivation and natural curiosity that the children already possess. It is also important for teachers to also understand the background and environment that learners are bringing to school so that they can make suggestions and arouse student interests in order to help them grow by leading them into new areas of knowledge



- ▶ teachers are expected to think deeply about knowledge construction, how we think and learn, the purpose of curriculum in the life of the child, and the role of school and societal reform.
- ▶ He worked throughout his life to develop and refine his philosophy of experience, describing all learning as defined by the quality of interactions between the learner and the social and physical environment.
- ▶ According to Dewey, teachers have a responsibility to structure educational environments in ways that promote educative learning experiences, those that change the learner in such a way as to promote continued learning and growth. The capacity to reflect on and make meaning from one's experiences facilitates this growth, particularly in increasing one's problem-solving abilities.
- ▶ Columbia University and moved his family to New York. Chicago was the seedbed of Dewey's more practical approach to the profession of teaching. He had experienced the problems of supporting his theories in an unreceptive climate and had worked with teachers closely in an experimental setting that gave him insight into both the problems and possibilities for teaching. His exposure to Young must have educated him by bridging the gap between his own experience and that of the teachers who would, presumably, man the helms of his progressive schools.

