

John Dewey: His Life, Philosophy, and Importance to Education

LIFE SKETCH OF JOHN DEWEY

Family John Dewey was born on October 20, 1859, in Burlington, Vermont

His father was a merchant and proprietor of a tobacco shop

His mother was a daughter of a wealthy farmer

He had 3 brothers, however one died as an infant

Early Life John attended Burlington public schools and excelled as a student

At only fifteen years old, he enrolled at the University of Vermont

He took an interest in philosophy while attending college.

Educational Outline

After graduating second in his class, his cousin proposed him a teaching job at a seminary in Oil City, Pennsylvania.

He worked there for two years After his time in Pennsylvania, Dewey went back to Vermont and taught at a private school While teaching, he developed many academic philosophies and discussed them with his former college professor

He later decided to take a hiatus from teaching and study psychology at John Hopkins.

He received a doctorate degree in A few years later, he began teaching at the prestigious Columbia University

Shortly after teaching at Columbia, Dewey became head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Chicago and served as director of its School of Education for two years

Writing Dewey wrote his first two books in 1887 and 1888

Over Dewey's lifetime he published more than 1,000 works. These works were composed of essays, articles, and books

These works portrayed many topics such as psychology, philosophy, educational theories, culture, religion, and politics

Contribution of John Dewey to Education

John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer whose thoughts have great influence in education and social reform. Dewey is best known for his writings on education. But he also has written about many other topics, including experience, logic, ethics, inquiry, democracy, nature, and art. John Dewey, one of the greatest American modern thinker's, theorist and educator.

NOTE#

Education Reform John Dewey was very supportive of improving education

He believed that education should be based on the principle of learning through doing which is also referred to as democratic learning

In 1894, John and Harriet Dewey founded their own experimental primary school named the University Elementary School at the University of Chicago.

The purpose of the school was to test Dewey's theories about education. Shortly after its opening, the school was closed because of a dispute with the university

Here is an interview with Washington State University scholar, A.G. Rud, about John Dewey and his impact on educational reformation in America:

John Dewey's Philosophy of Education

Dewey defines education as the ' development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities". It is a process that begins with the very birth of the child, and goes on throughout the whole life. It is a process which has two sides- one psychological and the other sociological.

The main aims of education as advocated by Dewey are:-

Social Efficiency: According to Dewey the development of social efficiency is one of the aims of education. To him school is a social institution. The school should be organised in such a way that the activities of the outer world are reflected.

Education is life: Dewey emphasises that education is not a preparation for life, it is life itself. The child lives in the present. The future is meaningless to him. Hence it is absurd to expect him to do things for some future preparation.

Education is experience: Dewey favoured an education by, of and for, experience. Every new experience is education. An old experience is replaced by a new experience. The human race he gained experience in its struggle to meet the needs of life. This ' struggle for existence ' is a continuous process.

Education should combine theory & practice: The aim of education, according to Dewey should be 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.

Dewey on School Curriculum

- Dewey advocates that broader curricular programmes are needed and emphasis should be placed in the total development of the person as being equally important as the intellectual and the academic.
- The teacher is a guide and director he steers the boat, but the energy that people it must come from those who are learning. The more a teacher is aware of the past experience of students of their hopes, desires, chief interests the better will be.
- The teacher is engaged not simply in the training of individuals but in the formation of the proper social life. In this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God.

Dewey's Method of Teaching

Dewey's method of teaching is based on his pragmatic philosophy.

He is of the opinion that direct experience is the basis of all method.

Knowledge takes place from concrete and meaningful situations.

Hence knowledge should come from spontaneous activities of the children.

Dewey's method of teaching are based on the principles of learning by doing activities in connection with the life of the child.

The project or problem method which Dewey advocated, the child's interests and purposes are the most important things.

For his problem or project method, Dewey laid down the following five steps as essential.

(1) The pupil should have a genuine situation of experiences.

(2) A genuine problem should arise from this situation and should stimulate the thinking of the child.

(3) The child should obtain information or make observation needed to deal with the problems.

(4) The suggested solution(s) should occur to him.

(5) He should have an opportunity to test his ideas by application.

SUMMARY

Philosophy The “Pragmatic Method”

Many of Dewey's philosophical pieces were inspired by the readings of the philosopher William James Dewey's philosophies were classified as experimentalism, or instrumentalism, the idea that knowledge is a collection of experiences. This ties in with the experimental method of inquiry (meaning that we are looking for the truth, information, or knowledge.)

His philosophy also promoted the goal of improving the human experience

Along with these philosophies arose an important teaching known as Pragmatism, the idea that the function of thought is an instrument or tool for prediction, action, and solving problems.

To simplify, we need to focus on real-life problems and answer practical problems with practical answers.

Dewey is considered the Father of Pragmatism

Pragmatism was the foundation of Dewey's various educational theories

The “Pragmatic Method”

Dewey's contribution to educational thought and practice

- (1) Dewey's social theory of education coupled with the logic of experimental method has been very influential in the development of modern education practices.
- (2) The greatest change has been in the recognition of the worth of the expense of the child. The child is no longer regarded as a passive subject meant for the imposition of external information but is considered an active living being whose interests have to be stimulated by participation in socially significant experience.
- (3) Dewey has been one of the significant leaders who have tried to introduce a more human touch in the processes of education.
- (4) He has been a powerful influence in interpreting the school as a common place for the realization of the significance of the immediate experiences and present opportunities of the child if he is to be a contributor to the march of the social process.
- (5) His insistence on activities of diverse kinds in school is also another aspect of his social theory of education.
- (6) The pragmatic method of instrumentalistic experimentation reacts against all kinds of mysticism, transcendentalism and absolutism.
- (7) The supreme contribution of Dewey to a philosophy of education is the theory of scientific democratic humanism.
- (8) Dewey is quite right in pleading for the wide use of the experimental method of science in education.

□ *Quotes "When we look at early childhood classrooms today, we see children building language skills as they share snacks with classmates, learning important science concepts as they water and care for plants, and developing math skills as they cook up a special treat for lunch. All these commonplace preschool activities stem from the ideas of a forward-thinking and most uncommon man." "To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness." "The good man is the man who, no matter how morally unworthy he has been, is moving to become better." "Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another." "Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes." "Without some goals and some efforts to reach it, no man can live." "The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action." "We only think when we are confronted with problems." "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience." "Like the soil, the mind is fertilized while it lies fallow, until a new burst of bloom ensues." "A problem well put is half solved."*

THANK YOU