

## Quadrant II - Notes

**Paper Code: EDU 01**

**Module Name: Contributions of Great Educators- John Dewey**

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### **Contributions of Great Educators-John Dewey (1859-1952)**

Greatest educational thinker and reformer of the 20th century, John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist and practical teacher, born in Vermont, New England in 1859.

He graduated from the University of Vermont in 1879, and then proceeded to John Hopkins University where he earned his PHD. He became a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Michigan where he remained till 1894. In that year he was appointed the head of the department of philosophy in the University of Chicago. From 1902 to 1904 he was also the director of the School of Education. In 1896 he founded his laboratory school in the university. This school brought him world fame. All his theories were tested in the school. His concept of education was modified and clarified in the light of practical experience of the school situation.

In 1904 he became Professor of philosophy at Columbia University, which position he held until he died in 1952. During these years he undertook educational engagement and commissions abroad. He delivered lectures in the University of Tokyo, the Peiking University and was invited by the Turkish government to suggest the reorganisation of the Turkish School. Dewey has exercised influence not only on the American education but also on the education systems in other countries as well as in India.

His most philosophic and practical mind made far reaching contributions to the curriculum and methods of teaching, the concepts of democracy and discipline. A pragmatic thinker, Dewey emphasized the practical aspects of education. He believed that education must be child centred and students must explore and learn through experience. He advocated progressive education.

**Influence on American education-** Dewey contributed more to the reconstruction and redirection of American education and exercised influence on education all over the world. The happiness of the school children and the friendliness between the teachers and the students, the respect for dignity of the individual, the freedom and equality that we today sense and appreciate in American schooling, owes credit to Dewey's Educational philosophy. His was an education of, by and for experience.

To understand John Dewey's contribution to education we need to first have a look at his concept of education.

## **Concept of Education**

- Education involves continuous reconstruction and reorganization of experiences which add to the meaning of experiences and which increases the ability to deduce the course of subsequent experience.
- Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his responsibilities.

Dewey thus defined the educational process as a continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experiences, for he believed that it is only through experience that a man can maintain and better himself in the world. Education is thus an active process of experiencing wherein students must explore and learn through experience. Thus Dewey's was an education by, of and for experience.

Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. It is not a part of life, but life itself. Since the school is a reflection of the larger society, the experiences that the child has in school must be as real and vital to him as that of home. School prepares him to actively participate in the community life and helps him gain knowledge of how to face the actual problems in life. Thus Dewey concluded that Education is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his responsibilities.

## **John Dewey contribution to Modern Education**

John Dewey developed and endorsed experimental strategy. He made far-reaching contributions to the curriculum and methods of teaching which prove relevant even today. His concept of school as a community and child as a centre of educational experiences proves appropriate in modern education. He gave a new direction to education, which we shall try and understand as we consider the following points;

- The psychological and sociological aspects of education
- Child centred education
- Democratic conception of education
- Universal education
- Flexible activity based curriculum
- Methods of teaching
- Concept of discipline
- Modern thoughts and progressive education

### **Educational Process-the psychological and sociological aspects of education**

Credit goes to John Dewey for using psychological and sociological aspects of education, which form an organic whole. Education must therefore begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacity, interest, attitudes and inclinations. These must then be translated into terms of their social equivalent, of what they are capable of in the way of social services.

He established an organic relationship between the individual and the society. All education according to Dewey is for the progress of the individual in particular and the society in general.

## **Child centred education**

John Dewey stressed on child centred education and deserves credit for emphasising this form of education, study of individual differences now forms the basis of present-day education. The child is the starting point, the centre and the end. He believed students must explore and learn through their own experiences.

## **Democratic conception of education**

He established an organic relationship between the individual and the society. School according to him is a miniature society. What the students experience in the school will help them learn to live in the society. This organic relationship forms the foundation of democratic values in education. Cultivation of the democratic values, inculcation of social responsibility are the major objectives of education. The nature of the school community should be democratic and the child should be trained in the art of living together.

He viewed democracy as a weapon to demolish barriers between individual communities and nations. Democracy as a chance for free and compulsory education can be traced back to Dewey.

## **Universal education**

Dewey viewed democracy as a chance for free and compulsory education. His ideals also lead to faith in universal and compulsory education to all. Every individual must be given the opportunity to develop his personality through education.

## **Curriculum**

John Dewey rejected a ready-made curriculum and wanted it to grow out of the student's interest, impulses and experiences, consisting of activities and projects, leading to the reconstruction of experiences. He suggested a flexible, activity based curriculum. Experience centred curriculum based on the child's interest, abilities and requirements formed the core of the curriculum. Interaction between the school and the society was important and hence occupations and associations which serve the need of men were included in the curriculum. Introduction of skill subjects and importance of games in the modern curriculum owe credit to John Dewey.

## **Methods of teaching**

John Dewey advocated learning by doing. His Experimental Method, Project Method, Problem Solving method prove extremely useful even today.

The *project method* where children learn from their own efforts and experiences is a direct offshoot of Dewey's theory of learning by doing. Basis of this method is that learning must be accomplished by self- doing, self- interest and self- activity and through the experiences gained by the students.

The *problem solving* method emphasized on activity directed towards the solution rendered to real life problems faced by individuals in their social life.

## **Concept of discipline**

Self -Discipline and social discipline are integral to education and these can be inculcated through activities and democratic values. Inclusion of social activities in the school curriculum would afford a sense of discipline as beneficial for individual and social life.

## **Modern thoughts**

He was a believer of scientific way of thinking. Dewey encouraged original thinking and experimentation. His belief that education itself is life- gave rise to progressive education.

John Dewey gave a new direction to education. His ideas on the practice of education were in touch with the actualities of life. The experimental schools in the present day draw their inspiration from the Laboratory School developed by John Dewey in 1896 at Chicago. In these schools new philosophy of education are put to test of experience and developed in accordance with the results actually obtained in practice. In today's complex world where there is a constant struggle for stability, an awareness of individual responsibility needs to be aroused. It is the school which can contribute to this by training the young mind in specific and experimental thinking and by helping them to experience the need for democratic cooperation. This was Dewey's great message for the school and the society. Attainment of social unity was his goal.