

**NEW DIMENSIONS OF THE CHILD-CURRICULUM RELATIONSHIP
IN THE CONCEPTION OF THE AUTHOR JOHN DEWEY**

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Abstract

The education is the result of the experience of culture which the child can amass and assimilate under certain conditions. Thus, the curriculum should guide the child's experience taking into account the shortest paths. However, the reference to the past should only be considered as a form of departure in what will later be the child's true experience. The experience is the result of all that humanity has accumulated over time forming ongoing experiences through a permanent process of cultural reconstruction. In other words, education is the very reconstruction of experience in relation to the previous experience.

Keywords: child-curriculum; constructivism; teaching method;

John Dewey's curriculum concept

In *The Child and the Curriculum*, John Dewey starts from the prerequisite that education is the result of the interaction between the child (seen as an immature, undeveloped being) and the social value, meaning and purpose found in the experience of the adult. (Dewey, 1977, 67). Therefore, the past can be an important resource for what the future of humanity in general and the future of the child in particular stands for.

Therefore, for Dewey, the experience is “a synthesis between the learning experience and what one studies” (Dewey, 1977, 71). What is interesting in John Dewey's view is that school is far from the child's intention and aspirations. In other words, the curriculum (which is not logically exposed to cultural content) is and must be child-centered (Dewey, 1972, p.67). This idea becomes legitimate by virtue of the fact that outside of school, the pupil cannot use any form of experience in any way. That is, everything that the child has capitalized on in school cannot be used in his daily life. Therefore, the psychological and the logical aspects can constitute what later stands for the accumulated experience. The

curriculum must be well established by virtue of a clear, coherent path, a state of affairs assumed and accepted in the Romanian specialized literature as well (Potolea, 2002, 72).

Moreover, the curriculum must have a special psychological basis; it must be psychologized, thus avoiding for it to be imposed or positioned in opposition to the state and what the child represents *sine qua non*. The curriculum is the result of a time experience of humanity, just as a traveler uses his or her own experience to guide other travelers in the accumulation of personal experiences. It is interesting that through the curriculum the teacher is guided, oriented in his or her own activity, so that he or she can directly influence what the child's learning environment stands for (*Ibidem*, 77).

A very good knowledge of what a curriculum is *per se* can allow the teacher to identify the child's ability and potential in the learning process. The truth gained through knowledge leads through experience to the formation of the curriculum. That is the reason why, if the teacher provides guidance to the pupil, he or she is the one who has to complete the process. Thus, the concept of "learning experience" used by Dewey becomes legitimate by extrapolating it to the dimension of the educational reality. Such an image shows the paradigm shift that occurs with the advent of Dewey's theory. Curriculum also means the experience of how a child learns and not just what he or she learns.

The teacher-pupil relationship

As we showed in the previous subchapter, the teacher has the role of guiding the child in the accumulation of his or her own experience. Of course, this can also be materialized by virtue of the previous experience of humanity and implicitly of what the idea of culture stands for. Based upon these considerations, John Dewey believes that the program and the inexperienced child can be obstacles to the formation of the true experience and the acquisition of knowledge and truth.

Seen as a social institution, the school is responsible for the pupil's learning environment. Thus, the school, through the teacher, must contribute to a whole process of experimentation and interaction of the child with what is called the curriculum. Thus, learning and education become social processes through the participation of the pupil and the teacher in the social consciousness.

The psychological learning in an effective way is a prerequisite of the future and at the same time of the child's success. To teach the pupil how to be in relation with his own self

means to prepare him or her for life and the teacher plays an important role in this respect. Under these conditions, the teacher must know the purpose, usefulness and meaning for which a pupil must prepare, and this is possible through knowledge, experience and the power of anticipation. Thus, the child's education does not mean preparation for the future, but preparation for his own self in the present, in order to ensure his or her successful future.

The child's education is an interaction between home and school education. That is why school must be perceived as a social experience of what is happening in the home environment. The relevance of what the child needs to learn is determined by the teacher, and the teacher should guide the pupil through the specific learning environment.

The school is criticized by Dewey on the grounds that it does not always relate to the true reality of the pupils and that it cannot reflect their true needs. Therefore, the teacher must allow his own pupils to build their own learning experience. The objectives on which education is to be achieved must observe a social order through appropriate means.

The Dewey's constructivism consists precisely in the fact that teachers make pupils learn in a relaxed way, and this is possible if they are aware that any subject of learning can become relevant to life insofar as this can be realized. The teacher's duty is therefore to give a specific interest to the wishes of his or her own pupils.

John Dewey's pedagogical conception is a conception of the new reform not only for its country of origin, but also for many states in the USA and for many countries in Asia and even in Africa. Through education, Dewey wanted nothing more than the true democratization of the school and, last but not least, the true democratization of society (Stanciu, 1996, 54). Thus, the teacher must make the child learn on his own, but "not by reading explanations about the nature of fire or food, but by burning and eating, that is, by action" (Dewey, Dewey, 1937, 60). It is understood that beyond the metaphorical language, Dewey pleads for the idea of activism of the pupil, of real pragmatism. In fact, his philosophical and educational conception is legitimized in the name of pragmatism. Therefore, the education is a "necessity of life" (Dewey, 1920).

Implications of the child-curriculum relationship in teaching-learning-assessment

In *My Pedagogic Creed*, John Dewey talks about the sociological and psychological impact of the educational process. Thus, the sociology is the scenario, and the psychology is the basis of education and the two dimensions work together and interact by virtue of internal

experience (truly operationalizable in the school environment). In this way, the individual perspective of each pupil is what matters and not the collective perspective.

Changing the way we approach the subject means for John Dewey to consider all the contents “socially, practically and educationally” (Suditu, 2003, 20-21). An important place, in this regard, is occupied by the handcraft, the gym classes and the cooperative learning. In other words, the textbook is no longer the main teaching tool, precisely because it contains knowledge which had to be memorized by heart by the pupils.

John Dewey does not accept this, because this teaching method made pupils passive, without personality. The learning by heart of the contents must be replaced by anchoring pupils in the social reality, which allows for the formation of active, dynamic, social and mature people.

Without interest or without reason, seen as a spontaneous and intrinsic action (Dewey, 1972, 242), education is not possible (Dewey, 1992, 210). The disinterest leads to hostility and indifference, and discipline is what remedies such a state of affairs (Dewey, 1972, 235). That is why the idea of pragmatism in education is justified, a pragmatism that leads the pupil to real things (Dewey, 1972, 45). The ideas acquired by schoolchildren as a result of a whole motivational process must represent a motive-force in what subsequently represents the formation of behavior and a purpose in life.

Conclusion

Moreover, its implications in education and implicitly in the philosophy of education are of a positive nature precisely because he tried to make a connection between the social nature of learning and the society itself. Through pragmatism, the education has been rebuilt by appealing to ideas related to the biological and social nature of the human being. In other words, the social and practical values become legitimate in pedagogy and in the curriculum theory as a result of such a pragmatic reconstruction of the previous experience.

Therefore, the teacher must not exaggerate by teaching abstract notions and theories, but he or she must integrate the pupil into the social and active life of the society. The acquisition of new knowledge must also have a social utility and a pragmatic nature. The pragmatic correspondence between the school (environment) and the child is made by the teacher himself.

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