John Dewey - precursor of the curriculum theory

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Abstract

John Dewey (1859-1952) can be considered precursor of the curriculum theory based on two arguments, a historical one and an axiomatic one:

1) Dewey’s pedagogical belief in the values of education at the level of the organic link between the psychological needs of the student and the social requirements of the school, of the modern society on its way to industrialization and democracy.

2) Conceiving of education as a model of development of both the individual and the society implying the reconstruction of the student’s experience according to the democratic ideal of modern society and to the “positive aims” established in accordance with the ideal education.

In the study “My Pedagogical Creed” (1896) John Dewey defines a set of fundamental pedagogical concepts from a curricular perspective: a) education; b) school; c) educational content; d) method of instruction; e) relationship between the social and education systems. All consider the interdependence which is necessary in education, in learning between the psychological needs of the student and the requirements of society.

Education as a model of development of the individual and of the society is conceived by Dewey as a “process of growth”. Education stimulates development based on two objectives: a) forming habitudes which assure “a general and stable equilibrium of activities” accomplished by the student in school and out of school; b) forming “the capability of readapting the activity”, of learning in school and out of it under new circumstances and in different situations.

Keywords: Dewey curriculum theory; curriculum paradigm; moral education; educational content

1. Introduction

Our study aims to demonstrate that John Dewey generally is a precursor of curriculum theory. For this we propose two objectives: a) to present synthetic Dewey's conception about education, generally; b) to highlight Dewey's conception about designing education and training, in particular.

2. Education and curriculum theory perspective

The conception of education, curriculum theory predicts, is promoted by John Dewey her studies written by the late nineteenth century. The main ideas launched since the twentieth century will be confirmed subsequently by all the writings published during the first half of the twentieth century.

In My Pedagogical Creed, (New York, 1897), an article of 36 pages, John Dewey defines the most important concepts pedagogical education, school (as an institution under the basic education system), the content of education method in education; general function of education factor of social progress (Dewey, 1992, pp.46-55).

Education is regarded as J.Dewey activity that contributes to "the individual's participation in social conscience of mankind". Is an ongoing process "begins unconsciously almost from birth," realizing then consciously lifelong. "True education" is performed by making psychological capacities of the child, student, etc., according to "social needs as it is".

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John Dewey is a precursor of curriculum theory, curriculum paradigm even in the way he understands the unity existing between the two sides of education, treated as "educational process": a) psychological side; b) the sociological side.

Great American Teacher Education believes that both sides are important in their interaction. Such education is only true, authentic quality. Treatment of education sided view leads, certainly, negative results.

John Dewey criticizes both tend psychocentric approach to education, and the opposite trend of sociological approach to education. "The psychological and social side are organically connected." Therefore, Dewey argues, "psychological definition of education is sterile and formal"; and "sociological definition of education as adaptation of civilization, make it a forced and external process that leads to subordination of the individual to a preconceived social and political status"

Dewey's conception of education paradigm theory predicts Curriculum: Education is: a) a product of two factors: individual and social; b) a process "begins with psychological capacity knowledge, skills and interests of the child (...) translated in terms of their social equivalents" to achieve "their realization of socially".

3. Fundamental pedagogical concepts discussed curricular

John Dewey School is seen as an institution which is based on the education system. It "is primarily a social institution." Its general function "to represent modern life", to submit what does this essentially by reduction "in embryonic form." Its main functions are following: a) ensure continuity between family life, work training, training and professional integration; b) provide moral education, "based on conception school as a way of social life"; c) foster child assessment, student "through community life"; d) to capitalize on the teacher "as a member of the community".

Dewey education content is reviewed by the formula of "educational content". In his view "educational content - or content of school curriculum - must have a unitary character, psychological and social. This involves "correlation school subjects - reading, writing and geography etc. - Social activities with their child." Special attention is paid to history who "has an educational value in so far as it presents phases of life and social development". Overall, the study any science "is educational to the extent that highlights materials and processes that make social life to be what it is" encouraging "to interpret and control aptitude previous experience".

Method in education refers to "the issue of capacity building and policy interest child. It ensures effective way of learning in school and outside school. Nature is psychological. This ensures that the active character of any method proves effective in learning based on pedagogical knowledge and optimal exploitation of capacities and interests of the child / student, but also his emotional resources. Dewey considers "that emotions are reflex actions."

The general function of education - ensuring social progress is analyzed by John Dewey from a technological and regulatory developments. Thus, from a technological, "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform." Dewey refers to genuine social reforms, not just on the base "law texts that are fleeting and sterile". From the regulatory perspective, "education is a regulatory process to participate in the social consciousness." Therefore, education should be designed as a factor of social progress based on the progress of each personality. Similarly, "the adaptation of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction"

In achieving the general function of education, the assurance of social progress, a key role of schools as the institution at the base of the education system. Dewey considers "ideal school of the reconciliation meet the individual institutional ideals."

On the other hand, it is obvious that the "ideal school 'premium depends on society. It is important for society to be aware of the importance of education. Because "through education company can organize its own means and resources" to a higher level
beneficial to the development of all sectors of activity: economic, political, cultural, community etc.

4. The curricular design of education and training

The design of education and training is carried out based on the aims of education John Dewey, developed in the context of a democratic society. John Dewey considers ideal of education, regarded as the "single standard for measuring the value of any living social" and the purposes of education, understood and promoted as "positive purposes" (Dewey, 972).

The ideal education is analyzed by John Dewey in historical perspective. Three models will identify such ideal education, determined the philosophy of education affirmed in a given society:

a) ideal of education in antiquity, developed based on Plato's philosophy which considers necessary for building a model formative unite perfect state, no longer needs change;

b) education ideal of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century is an ideal of humanistic education, focused on valorization of human personalities, resources which lead to the progress of society;

c) the national ideal of education, developed in the nineteenth century by calling "idealist philosophy institutional merits indisputable progressed society and the limitations arising from" the idea of subordinating the individual to the institution "(Dewey, 1972, p.72).

The ideal of education, designed by John Dewey in modern society industrialized twentieth century is an ideal of education based on democratic values that reflect pedagogical interests unite social group shared by all members of and fullness and freedom with which social group comes to interaction with other groups "(Dewey, 1972, p.72).

The goals of education should not be conceived as "externally imposed goals, charge that teacher and student work is mechanical and low". Educational purposes must be designed as a positive pedagogical purposes we can always help to "act wisely" for student and teacher, the two actors are in permanent interdependence of education.

The design goals of positive value must meet the following criteria:

a) "The aim must be established exceeded the existing conditions." Student work is an intrinsic goal (also a teacher), not imposed from without those two actors of education. Such analyzes for existing situation, but they regard it positively overcome.

b) The aim must take account of existing conditions, to be known; "Must be flexible, able to change according to the circumstances in acting". Legitimates her educational and social results from "that we can use to change the conditions" to improve existing reference work.

c) "The goal must always represent a liberation activities" to pursue the activity to a higher level; From this perspective, it clarified the relationship of purpose and objectives "are different objectives envisaged guidance means activity (...) : the objective is only a phase of active purpose - continues its successful activity."

Based on these value criteria, to be respected, necessarily, in the design goals of education are highlighted following the goals of education, John Dewey presented as normative imperative:

a) "A goal educational should be based on the individual's inner needs to be educated."

b) "The goal must allow translation of a method of cooperation with those who are undergoing training activities".

c) The aim must not claim "to be general and definitive"; he must ensure "broader and more flexible observation means" (Ibidem, see pp. 301-311)

In designing education and training is the fundamental pedagogical problem of clarifying the relationship between the child and the curriculum (Dewey, 1977, pp.66-83).
In this famous study, written by Dewey in 1902, are highlighted two fundamental factors of education - child education, "a being immature, still undeveloped," and the teacher acting on the basis of "purposes, meanings, social values, incorporated in mature adult experience."

The relationship of the sheets factors can be carried out differently if the teacher will emphasize: a) the contents of science, taken as a socio-cultural values, historical confirmed taught in this form pupil, in a direct form, unmediated teaching; b) the objectives he built specifically to link scientific knowledge included in school curricula and life experience of the child, the student.

The correct solution appears when the teacher pedagogical training objectives specifically designed to link school curriculum knowledge and life experience of the student. Only thus can be overcome "the conflict between the child and curriculum, individual and social culture of nature" (Ibid, p.67).

From this perspective teaching, the teacher should be concerned Priority "mode where the object of study - based on scientific knowledge, the" subject of science itself "- can become part of the experience of the child" / student, according to the possibilities and its interests (Ibidem, p.78). He has to solve the most difficult pedagogical problem, present in the design and implementation of any training activities. Pedagogical problem that is related to the fact that "the object of study, as presented to the scientist not directly related to the actual experience of the child," the student. The link to be created by the teacher depends on its ability to design properly the objectives of training in relation to the life experience of the student, the bond mediated teaching through presentation of content and methods of teaching, learning and assessment proposed indication, a normative.

5. Conclusion

John Dewey curriculum theory predicts by:
1. The conception of education, based on the unity of the psychological dimension - the social dimension,
2. Definition of concepts fundamental pedagogical (school education content, educational method, according to general education) from the curricular perspective
3. Highlighting the central role of the aims of education (ideal education for education) in our projected curricular education and training.

References