

**UNIT NO 2**

**PHILOSOPHICAL  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF EDUCATION**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Philosophy, filios “ofy” is derived from two Greek words meaning Love of Wisdom. Philosophy has also been defined as “The science of things divine and human, and the causes in which they are contained”. Philosophy has been called the mother of the sciences”, and the science of sciences. Philosophy is really the study of all sciences, considering the relation of each to all the others, so it is known as the ‘queen’ and mother of them all. Herbert Spencer has defined philosophy “a system of completed and united knowledge. (Foster and Hughes, 1990)

The philosophy is also called pursuit of wisdom, the study of eternal truth, realities and general principles.

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Al-Khaldoon, Dewey, Iqbal and others, all made significant contributions in the search of eternal truth and to find out answers to many complicated and important questions.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

After successful completion of the study material, hopefully you will be able to:

- discuss the basic concept, nature and scope of philosophy
- identify the need of educational philosophy
- discuss the following philosophical thoughts
  - i) Idealism
  - ii) Realism
  - iii) Naturalism
  - iv) Pragmatism
  - v) Essentialism

- vi) Progressivism
- vii) Reconstructionism
- analyse the relevance of the above mentioned philosophical thoughts with.
  - a) Religious and moral development
  - b) Intellectual development
  - c) Social and civil obligations

### **3. PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION**

Every system of education embodies a particular philosophy resulting from particular concepts, from which it cannot be isolated. Lobo (1974, p.1) says, “education comes from two Latin words “E” meaning ‘out and ‘ducere’ meaning’ to lead”, naturally education is ‘drawing out’ or ‘bringing out’ the best of what a person is capable of”. The function of philosophy is creative. It is to state the value, to set the goals, to point out the direction and to lead human being to new paths to attain the true status of self. The philosophy emphasises on achievement of knowledge, sense of good and evil, whereas, the education is a supreme need of an individual to bring the above mentioned desirable changes. It must inspire us to be human in this most inhuman society. Philosophy is an essential aid to education. When we apply philosophical thinking to education, we actually practice philosophy in education or we work within the discipline of philosophy in education.

The philosophy of education determines the aims and objectives of education. The aims and objectives of education differ according to the human order as they are embedded in the stream of history like any other perishable product of ages. As there are different aims and objectives of education, so there are different philosophies of education. These philosophies of education can be understood only in relation to their time and place. The educationists emphasize the experiences of whole society not the individual. These experiences become the values and norms of one generation that are transmitted to another generation. It is the task of educational philosophy not merely to reflect the spirit of the age in

which we live but to lead. It transmits to other generation. This transfer is a very gentle and continuous process. An understanding of different perspectives of educational philosophy may help you to work out your own plan of action or philosophy.

The scope of philosophy in education is unlimited. It formulates the aims and objectives of education, to achieve the set aim and objectives, proposes specific curriculum and methods respecting the cultural norms and values. Philosophy of education occupies a central place in philosophical thoughts. Dewey, (1963, p.328) infact, once suggested that philosophy may even be defined as the “general theory of education”. Obviously teachers need to be prepared to defend what they are doing. To develop their own philosophy they need some knowhow of the philosophical thoughts.

If education develops capacities in the individual to enable him to control his environment, what conditions are favourable to the perfect growth of capacities? How can we avoid any danger of mis-direction towards wrong ends? What is the criterion for the educational worth of an experience? The aim of education in Islam is to produce a noble person. What is meant by noble in the tenets of Islam? How can such an individual be recognized? What would be the qualities of his knowledge, skills, and habits?

#### **4. MAIN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS**

For a teacher it is very important to know the thoughts of different philosophers, because without having a reasonable knowledge of the relevant philosophy one may not express his beliefs about education. Main philosophical thoughts are:

##### **4.1 IDEALISM**

Socrates (470-399 B.C) is the most honoured philosopher in the history of European philosophy. He gave a new turn from the crude fundamentally metaphysical nature of philosophy to predominantly humanistic. He emphasized

on self-realization so he thought that the best way to reform the society was to teach virtue based knowledge instead of pure religion. He believed that truth, beauty and goodness govern human conduct. Most of his work is known through the writing of Plato.

Plato (427-347 B.C) is the most devoted pupil of Socrates. He is known as the mouthpiece of Socrates. His whole work depicts the inspirations which he derived from the personality and teaching of his teacher.

Platonic idealism derives its origin from Socratic teaching, who expresses the essence of a thing, which makes a thing what it is , and yet something that is free from all particular qualities. This concept, or the idea, as Plato refers to call it, is a sort of an 'Ideal'. Plato drew the conclusion that all visible things in this supersensible world reflect invisible models or archetypes in pure form. Such as universal concepts of truth, goodness, justice and beauty are realities which are not limited by time and space. Idealism holds that the idea is perfect (ideal) and everlasting, and its visible reflection is imperfect and transitory. An ideal never remains a single idea, it ramifies into a large number of different ideas, they constitute a system known as an ideology. Thus, an ideal is surrounded by ideas during the course of its application to the various aspects of natural human activity. Thus, all knowledge to the idealist is the result of creative thinking or discovery, not invention by human mind. He believes that the images appear to our senses, are all shadows of the real world of ideas, an invisible, immaterial mental world. However, individual examples are imperfect symbols of universal and eternal ideas but not the ideal as Plato phrased it 'laid up in heaven'.

#### **4.2 REALISM**

The main assumption of realism is that, things can be known as they really are. As a matter of fact the embryonic philosophy of Plato was developed by Aristotle (384-322 B.C) into an educational theory, which was based on the assumption that the material not the 'ideational' world is the real thing. Aristotle does not reject the 'ideas' but he believes them as construct of mind attached to the physical objects in the environment. The idealists recognize the contribution of the mind to process of knowledge and admit that knowing is an activity.

Whereas, realists say that mind is distinct from the object of its knowledge; being independent of knowing. They define knowledge as a discovery and direct revelation.

Aristotle did not reject his teacher's conception of the existence of ideas, but he started with the visible world as the basic reality, viewing ideas as joined to things which appeals to common sense. To him thinking and knowing begin with one's sensation of objects in the environment. Therefore, there is hardly any object which may not be perceived. Being the historical predecessor of realism, Aristotle believes that mind does not make the world but rather takes it as it is. Realism is based on the reality of relationship. Thus, there is empirical knowledge that "whatever is", is a diversity; therefore, each thing has its own nature, which determines what it is and what it is to become.

The purpose of education as described by realists is to acquaint learners with the facts of the world so they can learn how to cope with it. From this point of view Aristotle recommended the compulsory education. Like his teacher Plato he is also concerned exclusively with the education of boys. He has a little view of female education.

### **4.3 NATURALISM**

The desire to explain the development of society by the laws of nature or the ultimate explanation of all realities to be found in nature is called Naturalism. Naturalists believe that nature is the whole of reality. Everything comes from nature and returns to nature. Therefore, the children must be given experiences which fit their natural interests and impulses.

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) as mentioned by Basset (1978, pp. 28-29) stressed that natural processes should be allowed to take their course in the classroom. By visualizing the individual differences the children must be permitted and encouraged to develop according to their own nature.

Rousseau enthroned feeling above intellect. We should trust our feelings not our minds. Naturalists believe that nature is the best teacher, all good comes from nature. In short, naturalists permit and encourage an individual to do what

comes naturally. Let us cast a hurried glance on the attempts of Rousseau, as discussed by Lobo.

We have already known some of the most fundamental characteristics of the naturalism. Since the ultimate nature and the fundamental characteristics of life remain the same, therefore, the aim of education is not only preparation for life, but participation in it according to the stages of human growth and development. Rousseau's most famous book the Emile (1762) tells a story of the education of a boy from infancy to adulthood. He divided these stages of growth as infancy, childhood, boyhood, adolescence and youth. As the requirements of education for each stage vary therefore, appropriateness of education for the particular stage must be kept in mind.

#### **4.4 PRAGMATISM**

Charles Sanders Pierce, William James and John Dewey in America, and F.C.S Schiller in England originated primarily pragmatism movement in philosophy. It is a polemic against absolute idealism. The absolutist's belief in the efficacy of the dialectic method for establishing knowledge and truth criticized by pragmatists. They say that the absolutist's conception of the world is far too abstract and remote from the world of concrete personal experiences very large in number, beyond imaginations and tangled with multifarious contradictions. The pragmatists, viewed idealism as a "monument of artificiality" a 'way of escape' from real world. We may thus assume that for the pragmatist, philosophy is not only intellectual pursuit but is also mostly related to human life and existence. They don't believe in ideas and beliefs which have no meaning to modify the conduct for decisive action of adjustment and readjustment according to the situation. That is why; the Dewey preferred to call it 'instrumentalism' or experimentalism.

In his point of view education is both process and product; it must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experiences. The study of following material will be very useful to understand the pragmatism and its contributions.

Dewey outlined three levels of an activity that would be used at the school for pre-school children. Firstly, he proposes exercises involving sensory organs

and development of physical coordination. Secondly, materials and instrument available in the environment. Thirdly, children need to be involved in the activities promoting creative thinking. He believed that education is a social activity and provides school special environment for simplifying, purifying and integrating the social experiences to understand the cultural heritage to deal with their constantly changing environment.

However, there is no doubt that Dewey's concepts of learning by experience and by solving problems influenced the course of education not only in United States but throughout the world.

#### **4.5 ESSENTIALISM**

In 1930s "Essentialism began as an organized philosophical movement within education. It was basically a conservative movement in reaction to extreme variant of progressivism". The term itself had been suggested by educational philosopher Michael Demiashkevich (1935). It is said to be the swing back or break-down of 'perennialism' with some reservations. Obviously, the cultural heritage has a controlling interest in the educational process; over long periods of time, some things from this heritage lose their essentiality and new essentials or off springs of the previous essentials surface, which demand change. For example, once in sub-continent, the study of 'Persian' and 'Sansikrat' was formally thought essential to the making of an educated person. It is no longer so regarded.

Essentialists believe that all youngsters should be taught all those essential things that amature adult needs to know, as a useful member of the society. These essential things may change from time to time. Essentialists do not emphasise on 'Truths' constantly coming down from generation to generation. "Essentialism dwells on the practical aspects of life and feels that the school should waste little time on engaging youngsters "who will constitute tomorrow's society, "in reflective speculations. Schools should teach youngsters factual information which they are to learn and retain" (Armstrong, 1981 p. 219).<sup>1</sup> Essentialist place priority on essential subjects.

#### **4.6 PROGRESSIVISM**

Progressivism approaches the work of school from a separate perspective which is other that of idealism and realism. They view change as the essence of



reality. They believe in flexibility according to needs and interest of every pupil. They feel no single system may cater for the needs of students. Unlike idealist progressives do not believe that there are unchanged truths, therefore the experiences or activities framed should prepare them to accommodate to changing conditions. This view assumes that experience is primarily related to the nature of the student's experience, not to the nature of the external order. Thus the knowledge as a tentative explanation that may fit circumstances well and have practical significance is acceptable.

Progressivist, for the growth of individual's personality, offers the students, what is important to them to shape their individuality. Progressives view human being as basically good. Therefore, if people are allowed freedom, generally they will choose new, selected, and interpreted information, filter it into their minds and react with elements already there. It is assumed that it will turn out well for the people.

Progressives emphasise on conceiving youngsters' problems solving skills; for this purpose inductive approaches are particularly encouraged. Teacher may not provide learners with general explanation but requires them to use their own mind to work rather than the way the universe works.

#### **4.7 RECONSTRUCTIONISM**

Reconstructionism arose as a futuristic movement. They believe that society has been strained nearly to breaking point due to unnecessary expansion of atomic war gadgetories and wide spread public exploitation. These developments created adjustment problems to social, psychological and economic set up. The reconstructionists feel that the situation can be remedied by bringing great changes in educational system. To make the systematic adjustments to changing conditions revolutionary steps are proposed by reconstructionists. By devising the present educational techniques, they emphasise, on human resource development and a very effective institutional frame work which may build society afresh. Hence, it is imperative to have a team of qualified and trained manpower for the development of indigenous capability, rather than teaching out-dated information. The school should prepare youngsters to reconstruct their

society according to the change of conditions, to remain ahead in emerging situation. Reconstructionists favour the formulation and implementation of plans of action that are clearly directed towards the achievement of goals like human welfare and democratic decision making. There is an emphasis on practical approaches to moving the real society in the direction of reconstruction.

## 5. ACTIVITIES

1. “The republic” as its name implies, is a book on politics but it becomes a book on pedagogy as well”. Please enlist the peculiar feature of ‘Republic’ to support the view point.

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2. a) Enlist the reading Idealist Philosophers:

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- b) Enlist the qualities of a realist teacher:

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3. Here is a draft table of activities, please propose activities according to the stages given below for this purpose.

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Proposed Activities</u>
<b>Childhood</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Boyhood</b>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

**Adolescence** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. a)** List the principles of pragmatism:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**b)** Please write down the basic ideas of pragmatism in the following lines:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5.** By this time you may well have concluded the notion of ‘essentialist’ education in the light of your own understanding. Please write down the essentials recently emerged discipline in our education system which may be considered as essential:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. a)** List the intrinsic values which influenced the progressivism:

- i)** \_\_\_\_\_
- ii)** \_\_\_\_\_
- iii)** \_\_\_\_\_
- iv)** \_\_\_\_\_

**b)** Salient features of problem solving method are:

- i)** \_\_\_\_\_
- ii)** \_\_\_\_\_
- iii)** \_\_\_\_\_
- iv)** \_\_\_\_\_

7. a) Enlist the salient features of Reconstructionism:
- i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii) \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. EXERCISE

- Q. No. 1** Define philosophy and critically examine the relationship of philosophy to education.
- Q. No. 2** What do you understand by the term 'Idealism'? Please explain it.
- Q. No. 3** Explain the Characteristics of 'Realism'.
- Q. No. 4** How can Naturalist education fulfil the demands of rapidly expanding technological advancements?
- Q. No. 5** "Extreme individualism is anti-social, whereas individuals sacrifice their hopes for society? Discuss in the light of 'Pragmatism'".
- Q. No. 6** Discuss four cultural influences on 'Progressivism'.
- Q. No. 7** Describe the aims of education in 'Essentialism'.
- Q. No. 8** How Reconstructionism places emphasis squarely upon the ends of education? Please elaborate.

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