

Details of Module and its Structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Education
Course Name	Contemporary Indian Education
Course Code	EDU501
Module Name/Title	<i>Educational thoughts and practices: critical reflection on the educational thoughts and practices of John Dewey with respect to the relevance in the present education system</i>
Module Code	CIE014
Pre-requisites	Nil
Learning Outcome	<p>After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and relate educational thoughts and practices of John Dewey in present educational system • Apply educational thoughts into various practices of education.
Keywords	

1. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
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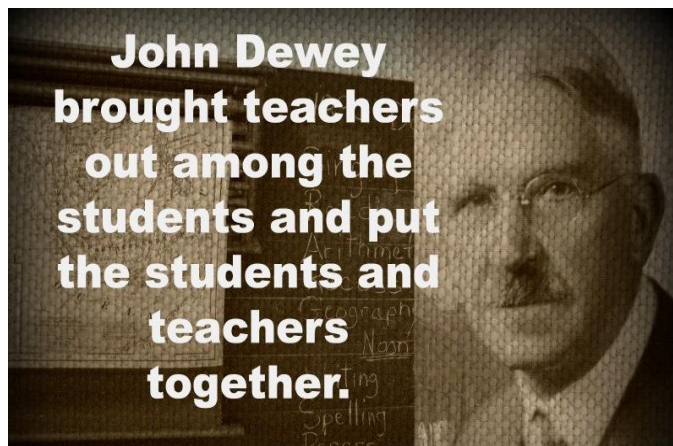
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1. Introduction

John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer. He was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont. His ideas have been influential in education and social reform. He was one of the early developers of pragmatism and functional psychology. He has contributed his ideas about education and society which are relevant to the modern age. John Dewey was the greatest of the pragmatists and generally recognized as the most outstanding philosopher of his country. Active for 70 years as a scholar, he was a prolific writer publishing approximately fifty books and more than eight hundred articles. Many of these have been translated into various foreign languages. John Dewey's concept on education is based upon the philosophy of pragmatism. Dewey believed that knowledge is resultant of action. According to him, change is the reality of the world. According to him, 'truth is an instrument used by human beings to solve their problems', since problems change, truth changes and therefore there can be no eternal reality. According to Dewey, change is the basic theory of education. Fact varies from person to person. Therefore, a person develops theory on the basis of consequence of actions and experimentations. So as to make human life prosperous and happy. Dewey won a greater international following for his

educational reforms than for his instrumentalist philosophy. Between the two World Wars, where previously backward countries were obliged to catch up quickly with the most modern methods, as in Turkey, Japan, China, the Soviet Union and Latin America, the re-shapers of the educational system turned toward Dewey's innovations for guidance.



2. Educational Thoughts of John Dewey

John Dewey was one of the first major associates of Jean Piaget to develop a clear idea of constructivism. He was much concerned with the learner and wanted to shed light on the learner as an important agent in the learning process. He had a precise insight about the process of education. The process of education should be aimed to make children capable of solving problems of life with their experiences.

Dewey argued that education and learning are social and interactive processes, and thus the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place. Thus, Dewey stressed education not only as a process for content knowledge, but as a process to learn how to live. In his eyes, the purpose of education should not only be the acquisition of a pre-determined set of skills, but the realization of full potential and abilities to make a prosperous society. In addition, Dewey goes on to acknowledge that education and schooling should be instrumental in creating social change and reform.

2.1 Concept of Education

Defining education, John Dewey said, 'Education is the continuous reconstruction of experiences'. His major concept on education has been quoted in his books: 'Democracy and Education' (1916), 'Logic' (1938), and 'Experience and Education' (1938). His ideas about the learning process could be understood as; the teacher should play the role of facilitator and guide in the learning process. He should not be the sage on the stage anymore. He should be a partner in the learning process, guiding students to independently discover meaning within the subject area. Dewey characterized the concept of education as curriculum-centered as well as learner-centered.

1. Curriculum-centered education is earnestly emphasized by Dewey, which focuses solely on the subject matter to be taught. Dewey argues that the main focus in this approach should be to ensure the participation of the learner and control passive behaviour; within this particular framework, *the child is simply the immature being* who is to be matured; he is the superficial being who is to be deepened.
2. For learner-centered education, he argues that for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, leading to the connection with new knowledge. Although Dewey was more in favor of this view of education, but alarmed for the excesses of child-centered education.

Dewey observes that too much reliance on the child could be equally detrimental to the learning process. The potential flaw in this line of thinking is that it minimizes the importance of the content as well as the role of the teacher. For this reason, one must try to strike a balance between delivering knowledge while taking into account the interests and experiences of the student. The child and the curriculum are simply like two sides of the same coin. One cannot work in the absence of the other. These ideas made John Dewey one of the most famous advocates of hands-on learning or experiential education.

The main educational considerations of John Dewey are highlighted below:

1. Experience is the central aspect of education. Children learn through experiences.
2. Problem solving and applying reflective or critical inquiry to solve the problems is the aim of education.
3. Knowledge refines through inquiry, reflective thinking, experimentation and fact finding. There is no ultimate truth of knowledge. More and more scientific inquiry gives birth to new knowledge.
4. Change is necessary for individual and social development; therefore, education system, methods, etc. should be changed as per the need of the times. Education is for child and the child is not for education.
5. Democratic society can be developed through education. In an ideal society, there should be development of social and communal feelings, awareness of duties and rights, mutual cooperation etc.
6. Relativism is the reality, as nothing is absolute, rather it is relative as there is always scope for change.
7. Instrumentalism is the object of existence to make the work done. Even, to materialize ideas, we need tools/instruments.

In view of the above reflections, John Dewey can be regarded as a pragmatist, instrumentalist, humanist, relativist, and experientialist.

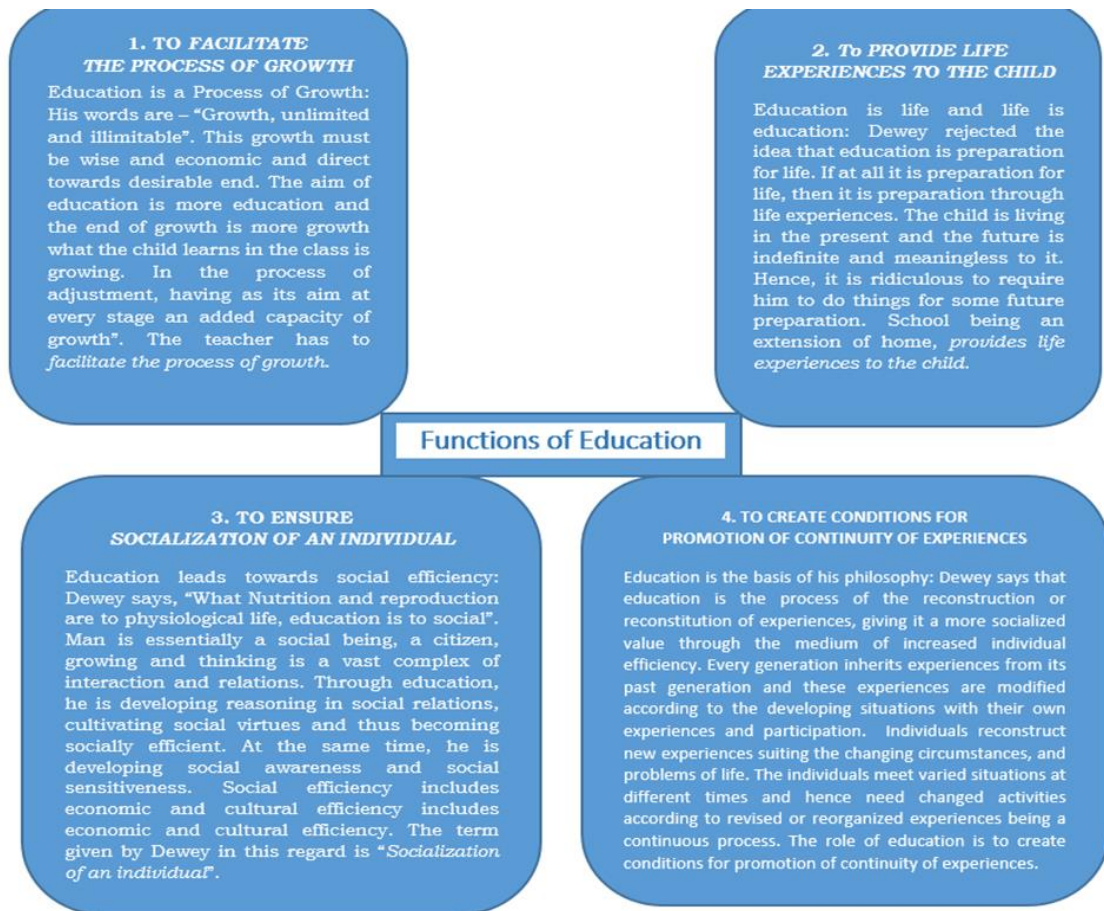
2.2 Aims of Education

1. Aims are proximate and there are no fixed and ultimate aims of education, according to Dewey. Being a pragmatist he maintains that aims of education grow out of the existing situations. It is not to reach at any prefixed final goal. Education therefore, is a means as well as an end.
2. According to Dewey the aim of education is the development of child's powers and abilities. It is not possible to lay down any definite code for a particular kind of development, because it may differ from child to child, according to the uniqueness of the individuals. The educator should guide children according to the abilities and instincts s/he observes in them. It is better, in Dewey's opinion, to leave the question of educational objectives unanswered. In general, the aim of education is to create an atmosphere in which the child gets an opportunity to be active in and contribute to the social awakening of the human race. From the pragmatic standpoint, education aims at creating social efficiency in the child. Man is a social being who must develop at all. For this reason, education must aim at creating social efficiency and skill.
3. Pragmatic education aims at instilling democratic values and ideals in the individual. Every individual must be given the freedom to develop his own desires and achieve his ambitions. Every individual must be equal to every other member of society. Such a society can be created only when there is no fundamental difference between the individual and collective interest. Education should create co-operation and harmony among individuals, instilling democratic values in school going children. In fact, the school itself is a miniature form of democratic society in which the child undergoes various forms of development, of which moral education and development is the most important. Morality can be developed through active participation, because such participation in the activities of the school trains the child in shouldering responsibility.
4. Pragmatic education is basically practical in as much as it aims at preparing the individuals for future life in such a manner that they can fulfill their requirements and achieve contentment. Dewey was critical of the contemporary modes of education because they tend to drive the child away from democratic life by giving advantages to a small section of society. It also lays more stress on book or formal teaching than is really desirable.

Hence, Dewey laid the foundation of a progressive education in the form of a Progressive School, which aimed at establishing democratic values and developing the child's personality.

2.3 Functions of Education

Dewey gives the following functions of education:



2.4 Curriculum

Dewey suggested that the curriculum should be determined by the child’s instincts and abilities. The need, abilities and interest of the child needs to be emphasized in the curriculum. The curriculum should be child centred focusing on social issues as the child is a part of society and ultimately the product of education should work for the development of the society. He stated four principles of formation of the curriculum i.e. Utility, Flexibility, Experiential and Proximity to life. The principles clarify that curriculum being utilitarian should have scope for change as and when required. It should provide ample experiences and events suitably linked to benefit the life of the child. Dewey emphasized on two curricular aspects of the educational process i.e. psychological and social.

1. *Psychological*: The curriculum should be determined keeping in mind the child’s instincts and abilities. Curriculum should be flexible and should be attempted only after discovering the interests of children and various stages of education. It should not be predetermined and rigid. It must consider four major instincts of children i.e. the desire to talk & exchange of ideas, discovery, creation and artistic expression.

2. *Social*: The curriculum should include only those subjects, which can be related to the children’s pattern of life at a particular stage. This proximity to

life can help in creating a distinctive unity in the knowledge imparted to them and thereby some harmony can be created in the teaching of different subjects like, history, geography, mathematics and language, etc. All education has its beginning in the individual's participation in the social life. Hence it is necessary to create an atmosphere in the school, which will allow children to take active part in the social awakening in their group.

2.5 Methods of Teaching

Dewey's method of teaching is based on the pragmatic philosophy that says that education should be about life and growth and teachers should teach students things that are practical for life and encourage them to grow into better individuals. Knowledge takes place from concrete and meaningful situations and direct experience is the basis of all methods. Hence knowledge should be provided to children through spontaneous activities. He was very critical of the contemporary methods of dividing knowledge into separate compartments because, he considered such fragmentation of knowledge as unnatural and recommended that as far as possible the various subjects in the curriculum should be harmonized. He advocated the methods like, learning by doing, field visit, project, problem solving, inquiry and problem based learning, experimentation, observation, critical analysis, debate and discussion for a successful teaching learning process.

The first, most well-known principle is related to the *theory of learning by doing*, in which the child learns best when performs actively in a particular subject. The educator is not to stuff the child's mind with information gathered throughout life, but to guide the child to those activities by which the child can develop natural abilities and qualities.

Secondly, there should be *integration of life and subjects* i.e. the integration between the child's life, his activities and subjects of study. All subjects should be arranged around activities in such a manner that child acquires knowledge through the accustomed activities. Mahatma Gandhi later on adopted Dewey's principle in his plan of basic education.

Thirdly, *catering to child interest* while designing methods of teaching. Dewey considers interest and effort to be of supreme importance in the process of education. The educator must understand the child's interest organize activities so as to utilize efforts, free of any fear or compulsion. This idea on educational methods later on led to the evolution of the project method in which the child was made to indulge in those activities which helped in the development of enthusiasm, self-confidence, self-reliance and originality.

Finally, *participation in collective activities* in a democratic educational pattern can help in evolving a cooperative and social spirit.

The above description on the methods and approaches of instruction makes it clear that any teaching method should have following five steps as essential:

1. The pupils should have a genuine situation of experiences
2. A genuine problem should arise from this situation and should stimulate the thinking of the pupils

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3. The pupils should obtain information or make observation needed to deal with the problem
 4. The suggested solution(s) should occur to pupils at the end of the activity
 5. Pupils should have an opportunity to test their ideas by application

These methods of education are apparently very suitable inasmuch as meet the requirement of educational psychology but in fact, has one inherent shortcoming, which was accepted by Dewey himself, that if the education of the children is fashioned exclusively according to the children's natural inclination, they will remain ignorant of many subjects. Besides, even their knowledge of other subjects will remain disorganized.

3. School Organization

School organization consists of the organization of all the academic, non-academic, administrative, establishment and management activities required and done in the schools. Dewey has commented in detail upon the organization of schools as follows:

3.1 Role of the Educator

Pragmatic education grants considerable importance to the educator, who is conceived as a servant of society. His task is to create in the school an environment, which will help in the development of the child's social personality and enable the child to become a responsible democratic citizen. Dewey considers the educator to be so important that he goes so far as to call him God's representative on earth. In determining the educator's own behaviour in the school, Dewey accepts democratic principles and educational psychology as suitable guides for shaping the educator's conduct. The personalities and methods of heads of the organization should be such as to introduce more intellectual organization without impeding the freedom of individual teachers. "Primary teachers should have the same power, the same freedom (and the same pecuniary recompense that now goes to university and, in less measure, to high-school teachers). Persons selected on the basis of their ability to respond to the needs of an educational situation and to cooperate socially and intellectually with others develop ability to work out and organize subject-matter and methods. Our 'higher' education will not be really higher until elementary teachers have the same right and power to select and organize proper subject-matter, and invent and use their own methods as is now accorded in some degree to teachers of older students.

3.2 Discipline

If the educator conducts himself on the lines suggested above, discipline in the school becomes easy. Difficulties arise only when discipline takes the form of an external force employed to restrain the child from expressing his natural desires. This is the traditional concept of discipline, which was severely criticized by Dewey. He argued that discipline depends not only upon the child's own personality but also upon the social environment in which he is placed. True discipline takes the form of social control and this is evolved when the child engages in collective activity in the school. It is therefore desirable to create an atmosphere in the school which encourages the children to live in mutual harmony and co-operation. Social environment and a mode, which inspire him to self-discipline rather than to subject him to long lectures. A peaceful atmosphere is undoubtedly conducive to good and rapid work, but peace is only a means, not

an end in itself. The educator's real task is to engage the children in work, which suits their natural inclination. Self-discipline is a better weapon, and this can be taught through responsibility. Thus he will also learn to lead a disciplined life as an adult.

4. Relevance to Present Education System

John Dewey's philosophy on education has a great impact on the present day education system. The critical reflection on his educational thoughts and practices shows a great impact on the present education system in the whole world in general and in India in particular. It can be observed from the present education processes which emphasize on the creation and construction of knowledge through experiences of the child. The child has the ability to construct knowledge and teacher helps the child for the same by utilizing previous experiences of the learners with environment, family, peers, society, play mates, etc. Dewey's contribution can be described as below:

S. No.	Impact	Description
1	<i>Impact on the aims of education</i>	Now-a-days, one of the important aims of education is the teaching of democratic values. Dewey insisted on developing social qualities in the child. In modern schools these aims of education have been accepted as valid. The supreme contribution of Dewey to a philosophy of education is the theory of scientific democratic humanism.
2	<i>Impact on educational methods</i>	The greatest impact of Dewey's ideas is seen in the methods of education in more recent times. Dewey suggested that education should be based on the child's own experience, and also that the method of teaching should vary according to the interests and inclinations of each individual child. These ideas influenced modern teaching techniques and led to active teaching in schools. One such school is the Activity School. The project method is also a result of Dewey's ideas. Even in the other schools, attention is paid to the principles of child psychology, which guide the educator in creating an atmosphere suitable for developing social consciousness in the educated. 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. The pragmatic method of instrumental experimentation reacts against all kinds of mysticism, transcendentalism and absolutism. Dewey is quite right in pleading for the wide use of the experimental method of science in education.
3	<i>Impact on curriculum</i>	The impact of Dewey's ideas on the subject of curriculum led to the introduction of manual skill subjects into modern curricula. Special importance is now being attached to various kinds of games,

		objects, the use of certain tools and implements, etc. In selecting the subject to be taught, attention is now paid to the individual interests and abilities of the child. Dewey's social theory of education coupled with the logic of experimental method has been very influential in the development of modern education practices. Dewey has been one of the significant leaders who have tried to introduce a more human touch in the processes of education.
4	<i>Impact on discipline</i>	As a result of Dewey's theorizing on the subject of discipline, now the students is entrusted with much of the work done in the school. In this manner the students are trained are self-control and democratic citizenship. Apart this, once the student have to face responsibility, he is compelled to think scientifically and reason out things for himself.
5	<i>Universal education</i>	Dewey's thinking and ideal also lead to faith in universal and compulsory education. Education aims at the development of personality.

Hence every individual must be given the opportunity to develop his personality through education. The current stress on the scientific and social tendency owes much to Dewey's influence. He pointed out that education was a social necessity, in that it was not merely a preparation for life, itself. It aimed at the development of both the individual as well as society. This leads to the comprehensive development of the individual.

5. Summary

In this chapter, we studied about a great pragmatic philosopher, John Dewey. He emphasised that aims of education must stress on development of child's power & abilities, different principles for different types of development, educator's guidance according to child's abilities & power, social efficiency, democratic values, freedom of development, individual & collective interests, co-operation & harmony, practical education and development of personality. Dewey emphasized on two curricular aspects of the educational process i.e. psychological and social. He clearly stated that any teaching method should have five essential steps, i.e. pupils should have a genuine situation of experiences, a genuine problem should arise from that situation and should stimulate the thinking of the pupils, the pupils should obtain information or make observation needed to deal with that problem, the suggested solution(s) should occur to pupils at the end of the activity and finally, pupils should have an opportunity to test their ideas by application in their lives. He promoted the teaching methods of learning by doing, integration of life and subjects, catering to child's interests and participation in collective activities. He indicated that school organization consists of the organization of all the academic, non-academic, administrative, establishment and management activities required and done in the schools. It also includes the role of educator and the activities like discipline.

**Quadrant-III
Materials****Learn More/Web Resources/Supplementary**

Books, articles, research papers, journals, case studies etc.:

Bharathi, V. D. & Rao, B. D. (2005). Educational philosophy of John Dewey. Discovery Publishing House. Delhi.

Martin, J. (2002). The education of John Dewey: a bibliography. Colombia University Press. Calumbia. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/112340/7/07_chapter%202.pdf

Sikandar, A. (2015). John Dewey and his philosophy of education. Journal of education and educational development Vol. 2 No. 2, 191-201. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/John_Dewey_and_His_Philosophy_of_Education.pdf

Simpson, Dauglas, J. (2006). John Dewey: Peter Long Primer. Peter Long Publishing. New York. Retrieved from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/112340/7/07_chapter%202.pdf

Links to web sites giving additional readings, Wikipedia, blogs, open source content etc.:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey
- <https://www.biography.com/people/john-dewey-9273497>
- <http://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/42008/1/Block-1.pdf>
- <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/46500/1/BES-122B3E.pdf>
- <https://sol.du.ac.in/SOLSite/Courses/UG/StudyMaterial/16/Part1/ED/English/SM-1.pdf>
- <http://www.tnteu.in/pdf/c5.pdf>
- <https://study.com/academy/lesson/john-dewey-on-education-theory-philosophy-quiz.html>
- <https://www.slideshare.net/pranaybhuiyan1/education-philosophy-of-john-dewey>

Glossary

Learning: Dewey believed that human beings learn through a 'hands-on' approach. This places Dewey in the educational philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatists believe that reality must be experienced. From Dewey's educational point of view, this means that students must interact with their environment in order to adapt and learn.

John Dewey: An American philosopher and educator (born Oct. 20, 1859, Burlington, Vt., U.S.—died June 1, 1952, New York, N.Y.), who was a founder of the philosophical movement known as pragmatism, a pioneer in functional psychology, and a leader of the progressive movement in education in the United States.

Progressive Education: A broad movement for educational reform in the twentieth century. Progressive education is principally associated with John Dewey, but it contains many different and often conflicting ideas. In general, progressive educators view existing schools as too rigid, formal, and detached from real life.

Pragmatism: Pragmatism is an educational philosophy that says that education should be about life and growth. Two important elements of pragmatism include practical learning, which focuses on the real-world applications of lessons, and experiential learning, which involves learning through experience, not through simple ideas.

Aim of Education: According to Dewey the aim of education is the development of child's powers and abilities. For this reason, education must aim at creating social efficiency and skill. Pragmatic education aims at instilling democratic values and ideals in the individual.

Discipline: It advocates discipline based on the principles of child's activities and interests. Thus the discipline in pragmatic system of education is to be self-discipline, the discipline of the pupil's own work and purposeful and creative activity. Imposed and rigid discipline can have no place in the pragmatic school.

Teaching Method: According to Dewey listening is no learning and lecturing is no teaching, but doing is learning and discussing is teaching. If a belief works, we have a moral right to hold it. It accepts the method of integration and cares for studies. Pragmatic or practical methods relate learning to the life of the pupils.

Quadrant-IV

Self-Assessment

Description: In self-assessment Question No. 1 to 10 consist of multiple choice questions in which learners are required to select the correct one out of the four alternatives and Question No. 11 has five statements in which learner has to identify about true/false statements.

1. John Dewey's concept on education is based upon:
 - a. the philosophy of idealism
 - b. the philosophy of naturalism
 - c. the philosophy of pragmatism
 - d. the philosophy of realism
2. In order to develop a clear idea of constructivism, John Dewey was one of the first major contemporaries along with;
 - a. Jean Piaget
 - b. Rousseau
 - c. Plato
 - d. All of the above
3. According to John Dewey, education is
 - a. fullest development of personality
 - b. continuous reconstruction of experiences
 - c. for enlightenment
 - d. overall development
4. Dewey's major concept on education has been quoted in the book:
 - a. Democracy and Education
 - b. Logic
 - c. Experience and Education
 - d. All of the above
5. John Dewey has emphasized that;
 - a. Relativism is the reality
 - b. Truth is absolute
 - c. Reality is one
 - d. None of these
6. There is no ultimate truth of knowledge rather it refines through;
 - a. Inquiry
 - b. Reflective thinking
 - c. Experimentation and fact finding
 - d. All of the above
7. Describing aims of education, Dewey states that education has
 - a. Ultimate aims
 - b. Proximate aims
 - c. Fixed aims
 - d. All of the above

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8. According to Dewey, the function of education is;
 - a. To facilitate the process of growth
 - b. To provide life experiences to the child
 - c. Socialization of an individual
 - d. All of the above
 9. Which principle of Dewey's teaching methodology had Mahatma Gandhi adopted in his plan of basic education?
 - a. Learning by doing
 - b. Catering to child interest
 - c. Integration of life and subjects
 - d. All of these
 10. Which of the following points is not consistent with John Dewey's approach?
 - a. Children can absorb knowledge through repetitive exposure to material without active engagement
 - b. The teacher is a facilitator or partner in the learning process
 - c. The child is an active learner, not a passive observer
 - d. Learning requires a balance between providing knowledge and accounting for the interest and experience of students
 11. Which of the following statements are true/false according to the educational thoughts of John Dewey?
 - a. According to Dewey, change is the basic theory of education. ()
 - b. Teacher should be a partner in the learning process, guiding students to independently discover meaning within the subject area. ()
 - c. John Dewey is regarded as a realist, naturalist and idealist. ()
 - d. The school is a miniature society in which the child undergoes various forms of development, of which moral education and development is the most important. ()
 - e. In the educational process, Dewey emphasized on psychological and social aspects of curriculum. ()

Answers: 1. C. 2. a. 3. b. 4. d. 5. a. 6. d 7. b. 8.d. 9.c. 10. b.
11. a. (True) b. (True) c. (False) d. (True) e. (True)