

John Dewey's Pragmatism: A Catalyst for Educational Development in Nigeria

Towolawi Samson Anuoluwapo

Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7988-0949> towolawisammson9@gmail.com

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Abstract

Education helps in the development of any nation. The approach of the average contemporary Nigerian to education does not really portray the aim of education and its importance. The contemporary Nigerian education system tends to define education as a means of acquiring certificate in order to earn money for living but this is not the essence of education and this gives people a wrong mentality about school. School in this sense, is seen as a place where certificate is being given and not where knowledge is gained for an end to the problem of the society. This mentality has brought about dysfunctionality in Nigeria's educational system. This dysfunctionality has become a source of worry to many Nigerians as education system has failed to address the issues in the nation's life. All these are against the thought of John Dewey who sees education as the only way of redeeming the society. Hence, the ideas of Dewey are not outdated. They are still relevant to the present time. The purpose of this paper is to apply John Dewey's pragmatism to Nigeria's educational system. The method of research adopted in this research is critical and analytic. The study reveals that Dewey's ideas resonate profoundly with the current challenges and opportunities facing education in contemporary Nigerian society. The study concluded that the Nigerian education system should prioritize practicality and underscore the development of students' social problem-solving abilities.

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Introduction

Education is important in the development of any nation. Education remains a sector that has been misunderstood in many nations which affect the development of such nation. Education is intertwined with development which means that education enhances development but due to the misunderstanding of education, it makes education not to be fulfilling this aim.¹ The approach of the average contemporary Nigerian to education in our nation does not really portray the aim of education and its importance.

The contemporary Nigerian education system tends to define education as a means of acquiring certificate in order to earn money for living but this is not what education is primarily meant for. According to Adebayo, education is the total process of human training by which knowledge is imparted, facilitated, trained and skills developed.² The objectives of education are not reflecting in today's education, just as explained earlier, some contemporary Nigerians tend to tailor education towards paper certification which gives people a wrong mentality about school. School in this sense, is seen as a place where certificate is being given and not where knowledge is gained for an end to the problem of the society. This mentality has brought about dysfunctionality in Nigeria's educational system, which has become a source of worry to many as Nigerian education system has failed to address the key issues in the nation's life, for instance; unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, disease and superstition are on the increasing rate.³

The Nigerian educational system is one we can surely describe as a system grappling with, or enmeshed in many thorny issues and problems. Nigeria's education is not fulfilling its aim which it has very much neglected and left to suffer a bad fate. A nation that neglects education does so at its risk. In Nigeria, we have allowed our education to cripple. The consequences are made manifest in different ways in our national life. In the first place, the contemporary Nigerian education does not equip its recipients to be self-reliant. It removes people from productive activities in industry and agriculture. It channels every educated man or woman to pen-pushing and white collar jobs or the unproductive arena of politics, cut-throat capitalism, obtaining by tricks, fake contract award, and recently, the more

¹. C. O. Akpan and S. S. Apologun. "An Assessment of Nigerian Educational Problems in the Light of Some Philosophical Orientations" *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 89-95.

². M.U. Ushe. "Religious Conflicts and Education in Nigeria: Implications for National Security." *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 2 (2015): 117.

³. O.A. Balogun. "The Efficacy of Pragmatism In Resolving Teachers' Despotism In Nigeria Educational System" 2004, Accessed January, 12, 2025 at <https://www.globalacademicgroup.com/journals/nard/Balogun.pdf>

lucrative kidnap for ransom. The reason behind this is that our education system has failed to make people to be self-reliant in their life endeavours. Just imagine a graduate of computer science that cannot even develop any application, program, software, the question to ask is that what did they do all through the four years course? The curriculum of Nigeria needs to be properly addressed despite the development of Entrepreneurship centre in different accredited university. It should be tailored to the characteristics, knowledge, backgrounds, interests, attitudes, abilities, and strengths of learners, fostering a sense of achievement rather than frustration. A significant concern is the lack of practical application in fields like Computer Science, where students often graduate without essential skills such as coding. This highlights a disconnect between education and real-world requirements. While many universities have entrepreneurship development centers with well-designed curricula aimed at producing self-reliant graduates, the effectiveness of these programs is often questionable. Students receive theoretical knowledge but lack guidance on how to apply it practically in their futures. Addressing these challenges requires revitalizing the curriculum to ensure it reflects current global trends and meets the needs of 21st-century learners. All these are against the thought of John Dewey who sees education as the only way of redeeming the society.

In the view of Dewey, “true education comes through the stimulation of the child's power by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself”.⁴ Thus, it involves the acquisition and application of ideas to solve social problems. Real education is instrumental and experimental. It is not mere cramming or storage of socially irrelevant or unapplied facts. Education is a process of discovery where students would study what they are interested in at their own pace, as they are gradually becoming aware of their areas of expertise. Just like the way we have elective course in university, students are to decide on the course to choose depending on their interest and what they will want to become.

He therefore calls for a method of learning by doing, a method that will harmonize theory and practice. His major concern is that education has been taken in its utilitarian sense based on schooling and acquisition of certificates and degrees, which are good as a symbol but are not enough. Hence, the ideas of Dewey are not outdated. They are still relevant to the present time. In fact, modern science and technology are good objectively speaking, for they enable us to put our intelligibility in the external world and improve our human conditions by use of practical skills. At the same time, they tend to posit both good and bad effect if man through practical intelligence does not control them. To provide a solution to

⁴. J. Dewey. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (Henry Holt & Company, 1937), 39.

the problem pointed out in Nigeria educational system, John Dewey's pragmatism shall be examined and applied to the problems.

John Dewey's Pragmatism

John Dewey was a prominent American philosopher and educator whose ideas have significantly influenced the fields of education and social reforms. His philosophical approach, known as pragmatism, is rooted in the idea that the value of thought is determined by its practical effects and applications in real-life situations. Dewey's pragmatism emphasizes the importance of experience and experimentation in the learning process. He believed that education should be grounded in the experiences of the learner, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. According to Dewey, knowledge is not a static entity to be transmitted from teacher to student but a dynamic process that evolves through active engagement with the environment.⁵

Furthermore, Dewey's pragmatism extends to his views on democracy and social ethics. He argued that democracy is not just a political system but a way of life that promotes active participation, communication, and cooperation among individuals.⁶ For Dewey, a democratic society is one in which citizens continuously engage in the process of communal problem-solving and decision-making.

Instrumentalism

The philosophical notion of instrumentalism, also referred to as experimentalism, was formulated and extensively examined by John Dewey. Dewey developed this concept as a means of differentiating his own ideas from those of other pragmatists. In accordance with the views expressed by John Dewey:

What is most important in a thing or idea is its value as an instrument of action and that the truth of an idea lies in its usefulness. Dewey favoured those terms over the term pragmatism to label the Philosophy on which his views of education rested. His school claimed that cognition has evolved not for speculative or metaphysical purposes but for the practical purpose of successful adjustment. Ideas are conceived as instruments for transforming the uneasiness arising from facing a problem into the satisfaction of solving it.⁷

From this, Instrumentalism is the use of ideas to solve problems humans encounter in everyday activities. It assists in transforming a problematic situation into one where the problem is solved. Instrumentalism has made significant advancements within established

⁵. J. Dewey. *Logic: theory of Enquiry*. (New York: Henry Hold & Company, 1938).

⁶. J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

⁷. J. Merrily. *Pragmatism*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

methods. John Dewey as quoted by Oyenuga highlights thus:

The saying that an issue that is properly articulated is already halfway resolved is widely recognised and holds great importance in order to ascertain the challenges or obstacles posed by a problematic situation and to ensure its pertinence or avoid deviating from the intended course. The formulation of the problem plays a crucial role in determining the acceptance or rejection of specific proposals. The criterion for determining the relevance and irrelevance of hypotheses and conceptual structures has been discussed by Oyenuga⁸

John Dewey on Education

Dewey's educational framework might be characterised as an educational concept rooted in democratic principles. According to Dewey, democratic education is characterised by its capacity to facilitate the attainment of self-realization for individuals. The attainment of self-realization is exclusively attainable when individuals discover a means to use their distinct talents for the betterment of their community. Therefore, within a democratic society, it is incumbent upon us to aid young individuals in cultivating the attributes, behaviours, and virtues essential for achieving personal fulfilment. Dewey acknowledged the absence of contemporary societal cohesion. Consequently, he perceived school as a mechanism for social integration. Dewey posits that in order to cultivate democratic values through education, the school must transform into an establishment wherein the child temporarily resides, fostering a sense of belonging and active engagement within a communal existence, wherein the kid perceives their own contributions as significant.⁹ In essence, schools serve as formal establishments dedicated to facilitating educational endeavours. However, it is important to acknowledge that schools can also possess informal attributes within their official structure, and they should actively engage with society as a means of contributing to social revitalization.

Educational Crisis in Nigeria

The Nigerian educational system is one we can surely describe as a system grappling with, or enmeshed in many thorny issues and problems. Among such issues are those of corruption, underfunding, moral decadence, and the problem of accessibility.

Curriculum Issues

The problem of inept curriculum had become a source of concern and had generated a lot of debates among scholars of education in recent times. In an era where countries are

⁸ O.F. Oyenuga. *Dewey's Pragmatism As A Foundation For Political Development In Nigeria*. Thesis, Ago Iwoye: Thesis Submitted to Olabisi Onabanjo University, 2014.

⁹ F. Acheampong, P. A. George and E. Atta-Asiamah. "Professional learning communities and democratic ideals: The influence of John Dewey." *Open Journal of Educational Research* 2, no. 6 (2022): 392-404.

contextualizing learning and other educational activities, some of what we still learn in most institutions are imported and borrowed cultures and values. This, in turn had added little or no values to education in Nigeria. Five decades after independence, some Nigerian schools are still neck-deep in the study of foreign cultures, languages, religion, and philosophy at the detriment of indigenous human and material resources. What this trend had simply succeeded in doing is that it tends to create a very wide gap between our learning and the concrete situations of our societies. It is even more pathetic and demeaning when curriculum that are moribund in foreign lands are imported and revealed with the belief that it would work in Nigeria, even in the face of changing universal realities.

Education Tailored Towards Paper Certification

One of the problems in Nigerian education which has brought about corruption, immorality in the educational system is the mindset and attitude of Nigerians towards education. Education in Nigeria tends to be tailored towards paper certification and this has brought about wrong ideology about school. School is being seen by some Nigerians as a place where certification is being given and not where knowledge is gained for an end to the problem of the society. This is one of the major reasons why Nigerian graduates have not been able to think of how to solve the problem of the society. People are now admitted into tertiary institution with the mindset of getting certificates and leave, that is why, some students when in school, involve themselves in a lot of things and some people drop out when they see a little means of getting money on the basis that they see school as a place of getting certificates and the purpose of the certificate is to get money. The ideology of education as a means of acquiring certificates has brought about a lot of issues into Nigeria's educational system, issues such as corruption, examination malpractice. Most students involve in examination malpractice because they want to have good grades for their certificates. One of the factors that has influenced this ideology is the problem of inept curriculum.

John Dewey's Pragmatism as a Model for Contemporary Education in Nigeria

In contemporary Nigeria, education serves as a means of transmitting the deeply ingrained values and accumulated information of our culture. In the role of community representatives, teachers are tasked with imparting specific predetermined abilities to students, typically through an education system that prioritises subject-centered, discipline-oriented, and standard-based approaches. In practical application, conventional strategies employed in contemporary public educational institutions often yield an inflexible and authoritative learning environment, wherein students are prompted to acquire knowledge through repetitive techniques and are compelled to commit information

to memory as a means of showcasing their proficiency in specific subjects or areas of study. The rigid educational framework compels youngsters to acquire knowledge that lacks relevance to their personal life experiences inside overpopulated and impersonal classroom settings. Educators often perceive students as passive recipients in whom knowledge is to be imparted, irrespective of their own needs and traits.

Dewey's perspective becomes essential significance when considering the conventional approach to knowledge transmission. Dewey contends that conventional educational methods lack the ability to cultivate critical thinking skills and produce individuals who possess the necessary capabilities and breadth of knowledge to actively participate in a rapidly evolving democratic society. Consequently, he advocated for the implementation of experiential education, which entails a curriculum that effectively caters to the students' needs while also meeting the demands of the contemporary era. The author asserts that an ideal curriculum should consistently derive from the child's personal experiences and their ability to establish meaningful connections between those experiences and the subject matter at hand. Dewey's objective is to design a curriculum that fosters the growth of educational encounters for children within a democratic society. He expressed dissatisfaction with conventional educators who appeared to favour subject-focused courses over the individual interests of the child. According to Dewey, the objectives of an educational curriculum are to cultivate problem-solving skills and foster the development of critical thinking abilities among individuals. The individual asserts;

When a curriculum is heavily focused on subject matter, it tends to foster a disposition towards embracing others' opinions, while also emphasising the importance of memorization as a functional attribute. According to Dewey, there is an inverse relationship between the duration and intensity of exposure to a subject matter programme and the ability of young individuals to effectively utilise opportunities for experiential learning.¹⁰

Dewey's conceptualization of the instructional experience is grounded in the fundamental concepts of continuity and interaction, which he denoted as transaction. There is a prevailing idea that optimal learning outcomes for children are achieved when they receive support in establishing connections between their past and current experiences, encompassing both educational and non-educational contexts. This process facilitates the construction of new information and enhances opportunities for future development. The fundamental characteristic of this principle is predicated on the reciprocal engagement between the educator and the student in the process of assimilating the knowledge achieved

¹⁰. Dewey. *Democracy and Education*, 142

through maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between the individual learner's requirements within a communal setting and the subject matter to be acquired. This equilibrium necessitates a delicate interplay between the instructor's authority over conventional academic material and the child's manifestation of personal comprehension. The instructional process, devised by the educator, involves the dynamic interaction between the subject matter and the students. Within this process, there is a convergence of both existing knowledge and areas of unfamiliarity, leading to the integration of learners into a self-sustaining cycle of learning.

The current state of the Nigerian educational system is characterised by a disheartening portrayal of individuals with expressionless countenances, reflecting a sense of desolation and a lack of promising prospects for the future. The public-school tower has seen a collapse, leading to the creation of dungeons characterised by decrepit desolation and ruin. Formerly a space fostering the development of innovative concepts, it has now transformed into a confinement of stagnant and obsolete ideas. The observation made by examining this jail through the prism reveals a depiction of profound ignorance rather than the attainment of enlightenment at its furthest pinnacle.

One of the challenges associated with Nigerian education is its tendency to prioritise the existing curriculum, which does not effectively contribute to the advancement of Nigerian education. In contrast, the concept of pragmatism underscores the importance of pursuing an educational approach that encourages learners to actively engage with their natural and social surroundings, thereby fostering personal and societal development. Hence, education would encompass a structured set of courses designed to familiarise students with both the natural and social aspects of human existence. This would enable students to actively engage with their surroundings and critically examine their circumstances, hence facilitating personal growth and contributing to the betterment of society. In order for effective student engagement, it is imperative that the surroundings possess a sense of realism.

The curriculum should encompass subject matter that is pertinent to the learner's societal context, enabling them to engage in critical thinking and discourse with both the curriculum and the instructor. It is imperative to establish a seamless transition between the home environment and the educational setting. In actuality, the educational institution ought to function as a microcosm of the child's broader societal context. The student would possess the capacity to engage in critical thinking alongside the curricular content and the teacher, thereby fostering an inclination to explore their environment for the purpose of problem-

solving. A pragmatic approach can be employed to eliminate curricula that do not contribute to the growth and development of students. In Nigeria, certain curricula are deemed archaic and uncivilised. It is concerning that some curricula have been in use for over a decade without yielding any significant improvements. These ineffective outcomes fail to align with the fundamental purpose of education. Dewey argues against the adoption of this particular curriculum, as he contends that any frameworks of thought that hinder the comprehension and meaningfulness of lived experiences should be vehemently rejected.¹¹ According to Oyenuga,¹² John Dewey's truths pertain exclusively to those that serve as effective means for resolving the challenges faced by individuals in their inherent state of existence. When reflecting on the educational journey of a computer science graduate, it becomes apparent that their focus on software and application development often commences post-graduation. This delay in practical engagement can be attributed to the curriculum implemented during their academic tenure, which may lack sufficient practicality. Consequently, it becomes necessary to relinquish all of those ideas in favour of embracing John Dewey's instrumentalism.

One additional concern with Nigerian education pertains to the curriculum's inclination towards theoretical instruction rather than practical application, hence limiting the efficacy of education in addressing societal challenges. What is necessary in Nigeria is the implementation of a pragmatic resolution to the issue, rather than a mere theoretical proposition. The Nigerian education system primarily emphasises theoretical knowledge, leading students to prioritise exam success over comprehensive understanding. Consequently, some graduates struggle to effectively articulate and defend their acquired qualifications, since their focus has been primarily on exam-oriented learning rather than holistic comprehension. Due to the predominant emphasis on theoretical knowledge and certification within the Nigerian education system, certain students may resort to seeking means to remunerate their teachers and partake in other criminal activities.

The issue of an ineffective curriculum and its associated problems highlights the significance of considering the learner's needs and interests in instructional activities, as well as the necessity of the learner's harmonious relationships with and utilisation of the environment for their growth. The following are fundamental principles associated with the philosophical traditions of pragmatism. In this particular situation, the act of determining the indicators of inconsequential material within an educational framework that is based on

^{11.} Oyenuga. "Dewey's Pragmatism as A Foundation for Political Development in Nigeria", 73.

^{12.} Oyenuga. "Dewey's Pragmatism as A Foundation for Political Development in Nigeria", 73.

the interests, requirements, and the objective of aligning learners with their surroundings presents a paradoxical and contradictory challenge. However, as a result of our deviation from the fundamental principles of the preceding philosophical orientations, the problem of an irrelevant curriculum has manifested itself in Nigerian education.

The inadequacy of the curriculum has a significant impact on students, resulting in final year students being unable to independently finish their project, which serves as the final assessment, due to insufficient topic knowledge. There exists a common belief among individuals that the inability to independently complete assignments is primarily attributed to pupils of mediocre or below-average academic performance. However, it is imperative to challenge this notion since it lacks validity. The limited focus of certain high-achieving students on exam preparation without broader engagement with the course material prevents them from fully benefiting from the curriculum. This is often a consequence of studying in isolation and prioritising individual success over collaborative learning or cooperative efforts, thereby reinforcing an individualistic rather than social orientation. In his work, John Dewey argues that the process of simply acquiring and internalising information and truths is primarily an individual endeavour, which consequently has a tendency to foster a self-centered mindset.¹³ John Dewey delineated a pragmatic conceptualization of the ideal characteristics of a school, curriculum, and teaching methodology. He implemented the pedagogical approach known as the Socratic Dialogue style of instruction, as well as the project method of teaching, both of which foster student collaboration in project-based learning activities.

One further concern pertaining to the Nigerian education system is the deficiency of continuity and experiential learning, as proponents of pragmatism commonly assert that experience serves as the foundation for acquiring information. Likewise, the concept of education is characterised by experiential learning, a dimension that is notably absent in the Nigerian educational system. Education is the outcome derived from experiential encounters, wherein knowledge is acquired through direct engagement. However, it is important to note that not all experiences possess an inherent instructional quality. The educational experience is characterised by its capacity to facilitate subsequent experiences. The experience should be characterised by productivity and a lack of constraints. A limiting

¹³. O. J. Adeleye. "Pragmatism and Its Implications on Teaching And Learning in Nigerian Schools" *Research Highlights in Education and Science*, 2017. Accessed January 13, 2025 at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefin_dmkaj/https://www.uebad.org/books/Research_Highlights_in_Education_and_Science_2017_21-12-2017.pdf

experience refers to an occurrence that restricts the possibility of subsequent experiences from taking place. The individual who engaged in armed robbery and thereafter faced a firing squad on the Lagos bar-beach underwent an experience that lacked educational value due to the termination of his life as a result of the firing. According to Akinpelu, John Dewey characterised education as a process of ongoing reconstruction or reorganisation of experience, which enhances the significance of experience and enhances the capacity to guide future experiences.¹⁴ In order to foster a cohesive and continuous educational experience for the kid, it is imperative that the school serves as an extension of the familial environment. The institution of school is purposefully designed by society to facilitate the child's acquisition of knowledge and skills by optimising the learning process for increased efficiency and comprehensiveness. Dewey provides a description of it in the following manner:

The school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of their race, and to use his own powers for social ends.¹⁵

From Dewey's view of school, the school cannot be isolated from the community, nor should it remove the student from the community in which life, the student is expected to participate. The school is only to simplify the existing complex social life so as to make it easy for students to absorb. The school cannot directly change society, but it can reform it by equipping the student with social intelligence, and by holding up the ideas of the life in that society. All these can only be actualized through a professional teacher. The pragmatist's position in determining a professional teacher can be analyzed based on the pragmatic principle discussed earlier. Another problem of Nigeria's educational system is teacher despotism which embraces repetition of long aged curriculum, and usually feed the students with dead information, which has no relevance to then-life experiences.

Pragmatism as a school of thought in philosophy of education emphasizes practical knowledge. As a system of thought, it stresses man's use of intelligence to overcome problems that confront him. In line with the pragmatists' conception of teaching and the expected roles of teachers, it is believed that teaching is not the imposition of one person on another, but rather a product of interaction between teacher and the learners, a sort of communication or a shared activity between them. This follows that to teach in a pragmatic way, is an anti-thesis of being despotic. In other words, a pragmatic teacher must be prepared to explain his action or give reason for statements that he has made, or in any way

¹⁴. Adeleye. "Pragmatism and Its Implications on Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Schools", 4

¹⁵. Adeleye. "Pragmatism and Its Implications on Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Schools", 4

offer reasonable defense for his words and actions. He must acquit himself well in the classroom by a good mastery of his subject, an excellent presentation, a prior familiarity with techniques and methods of teaching, an awareness of the level of intelligence and the pattern of learning of his student and many other things. According to Oladele Balogun, “Pragmatism encourages the teachers to acknowledge the rights of students to ask questions, to call his judgment to question and to ask for justification of his statement”.¹⁶ In essence, there must be rational dialogue in a teaching situation and such necessity ostensibly erases the possibility of any iota of despotism.

Dewey argued that democracy has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year and day, in the living relations of person to person in all social forms and institutions. On different occasions, Dewey reiterated the same point. He asserted that the greatest mistake that we can make about democracy is to conceive of it as something fixed, fixed in idea and fixed in its outward manifestation.¹⁷ The emphasis Dewey presents in this study is to get rid of the habit of thinking of democracy as something institutional and external and to acquire the habit of treating it as a way of personal life. To him, creation of democracy as a form of all-encompassing culture and as a personal way of life will gradually lead to better answers to the question of political governance. Thus, democratic education is simply not about direct instruction in principles of democracy as the traditional educator might use them but about active participation in the community. However, for Dewey, democracy is not an academic subject but a moral outlook on life. Democratizing our lives is more important than merely democratizing schools. In this respect, Stone posits that:

The concept of democratic education proposed by Dewey holds significant importance. Individuals who assert their comprehension of Dewey's ideas, yet neglect to adapt and apply them to their specific temporal, spatial, and contextual circumstances, inadvertently overlook what could be considered his most noteworthy teaching. While my choice of language may differ from Dewey's, I concur with his distinctive perspective that equates democracy with education.¹⁸

Dewey posits that the essence of democratic education may be derived from three key principles. One key aspect of Deweyan democratic education is its foundation in the principles of life. According to Dewey, the process of acquiring knowledge through life experiences requires a fundamental moral inclination. This ethical dilemma arises from the

¹⁶. O.A. Balogun. “*The Efficacy of Pragmatism In Resolving Teachers' Despotism In Nigeria Educational System*”, 2004, Accessed January, 12, 2025 at <https://www.globalacademicgroup.com/journals/nard/Balogun.pdf>

¹⁷. Dewey. *Logic*, 106

¹⁸. L. Stone. Speculation on a missing link: Dewey's democracy and the schools. *Journal of educational controversy*, 3, no.1 (2008): 3

notion that cohabitation serves as a means of education. The presence of external stimuli, challenges, and support from others is essential for our overall well-being and fulfilment. Dewey expounded upon the imperative of embracing and assimilating individuals into our existence, encompassing both those whom we hold affection for or aversion towards, those whose perspectives align or diverge from our own, and those with whom we share a prolonged or fleeting connection. According to Dewey, it is his belief that individuals who hold differing opinions, even if they hold them fervently, can serve as valuable sources of learning.¹⁹ In fact, he suggests that engaging with such individuals might be seen as a means of broadening one's own personal experiences, thereby fostering friendship.

Dewey's level of satisfaction with the current school system appears to be low. He expresses a critical perspective on the state of primary school education. Additionally, he harbours concerns regarding the value and efficacy of pursuing a higher degree. Consequently, he utilises the term "liberal education" to expound upon his unique interpretation. A liberal education is an education that is typically associated with those who possess freedom and autonomy. The educational experience fosters liberation and facilitates personal development and advancement. According to Dewey, in order to ascertain the content of a liberal education, it is imperative to initially establish which disciplines hold the most potential for emancipating a contemporary individual. According to Dewey, the subject of inquiry pertains to the examination and analysis of the scientific method. The scientific method does not necessitate that every individual must pursue a career in chemistry, physics, or biology. This suggests that the focal point and essence of a liberal education will revolve around acquiring the ability to critically evaluate and examine the world through meticulous observation. Dewey posits that the inclusion of supplementary subjects, such as fine arts and the art of communication, will further facilitate the development of the person, ultimately leading to the emancipation of the contemporary individual.

Dewey contends that a significant challenge inherent in the contemporary educational system is in its inability to effectively address the prevailing global crises. Upon closer examination of the historical impact of progress, it becomes evident that our current living conditions have significantly improved. Nevertheless, the advancements we have made are inadvertently contributing to the erosion of various civilizations, the depletion of valuable natural resources, and the disruption of ecological equilibrium. Our educational system has failed to develop a comprehensive framework to handle pressing issues related to national

¹⁹. J. Dewey. *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*. (New York: Putman, 1939),12

integration, international understanding, community and social awareness, economic objectives, strategic planning, and cultural aspirations and principles.

According to Dewey, philosophy relies on and should endeavour to surpass the particular cultural context in which it originates. The objective of philosophy is to synthesise contemporary and historical perspectives, elucidating the fundamental concepts and principles of a given civilization, and subsequently reconfiguring them into a more cohesive and imaginative framework. The film consistently explores the idea of reconstruction. Dewey's research significantly influences his comprehension of the role of philosophy in society. The author demonstrated the embodiment of their overarching philosophical pursuit through their impassioned appeal to overcome intellectual shyness, which hampers the boundless potential of imagination. This plea advocates for embracing speculative daring, fostering a greater trust in ideas, and relinquishing a timid dependence on incomplete notions that cannot be unequivocally classified as factual. The individual possessed a thorough understanding that their perspective on philosophy included a more restrained role, in contrast to others who espoused the belief that philosophy unveils an enduring truth. Nevertheless, the lack of self-confidence is incongruous with the audacity necessary to uphold this position. According to the renowned philosopher John Dewey, the philosopher can only maintain a genuine and compassionate connection with others by embracing a blend of humility and bravery.²⁰

Conclusion

The exploration of John Dewey's educational philosophy and its critical analysis within the context of the Nigerian education system has provided valuable insights into the potential transformative power of a more practical and socially-oriented approach to learning. As I reflect on the thesis of this paper, which contends that the Nigerian education system should prioritize practicality and underscore the development of students' social problem-solving abilities, it becomes evident that Dewey's ideas resonate profoundly with the current challenges and opportunities facing education in contemporary Nigerian society. John Dewey's emphasis on experiential learning, hands-on activities, and the integration of real-world problem-solving aligns seamlessly with the needs of a rapidly evolving global landscape. In an era where information is abundant and easily accessible, the ability to navigate, critically analyze, and creatively solve complex social problems is paramount. The traditional rote memorization approach, predominant in many educational systems, including Nigeria's, often falls short in preparing students for the dynamic challenges of the

²⁰. J. Dewey. *Philosophy and Civilization*. (Minton Balch & Company, New York, 1932),12.

twenty-first century.

The call to prioritize practicality in education is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where societal issues ranging from economic disparities to environmental challenges necessitate a generation of thinkers equipped with practical skills and a deep understanding of their social responsibilities. The shift towards cultivating social problem-solving abilities not only enhances the academic experience for students but also nurtures a sense of civic engagement and responsibility, qualities essential for fostering positive societal change. In implementing Dewey's principles within the Nigerian education system, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders have the opportunity to shape a generation of students who are not merely recipients of knowledge but active participants in their own learning journey.

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