

## **J. Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life itself and the evocative value for Vietnamese education today <sup>1</sup>**

*A filosofia de J. Dewey em consideração a educação como a própria vida e o valor evocativo para a educação vietnamita atualmente*

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores John Dewey's educational philosophy, examining his broad and narrow concepts of education and his views on its role, nature, and objectives. It further assesses the practical implications of Dewey's ideas, focusing on their potential benefits within the context of Vietnamese education. By doing so, the article provides valuable insights that can inform and enhance ongoing educational reform efforts in Vietnam, highlighting the hopeful prospect of Dewey's philosophy contributing to developing a more effective and progressive educational system.

KEYWORDS: Dewey's educational philosophy, Vietnamese education.

### RESUMO

Este artigo explora a filosofia educacional de John Dewey, examinando seus conceitos amplos e restritos de educação e suas visões sobre seu papel, natureza e objetivos. Além disso, avalia as implicações práticas das ideias de Dewey, focando nos potenciais benefícios dentro do contexto da educação vietnamita. Ao fazer isso, o artigo fornece insights valiosos que podem informar e aprimorar os esforços de reforma educacional em andamento no Vietnã, destacando a perspectiva esperançosa de que a filosofia de Dewey contribua para o desenvolvimento de um sistema educacional mais eficaz e progressivo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: filosofia educacional de Dewey, educação vietnamita.

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## 1. Introduction:

The development practices of organizations or countries have shown that sustainable development must start with human development, and education is the most potent means to achieve this. Recognizing the importance of education for individual and societal growth, many thinkers throughout history and in the present have made significant contributions to educational philosophy and practice. Recently, Vietnamese education has been striving for fundamental and comprehensive reform, focusing on a learner-centered approach and establishing an educational philosophy that redefines the nature, objectives, content, and education methods. In this process, it is crucial to study and reference global educational philosophies for researchers and educators, particularly those with a profound influence and practical application. Among the educational philosophies of the twentieth century, John Dewey's philosophy, which values learners, emphasizes the importance of a continuous learning environment, and views "education as life itself," holds a significant position. Dewey's philosophy, implemented in practice, paved the way for educational renewal in America and Europe in the early twentieth century. His principles guide education in the world's most developed countries today, making the audience feel the significance and impact of their work. Therefore, it is essential to selectively study and inherit Dewey's educational philosophy to find valuable insights for building a robust educational foundation in Vietnam today.

## 2. Literature review

Dewey put forward his educational philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideas he proposed immediately sparked a broad international debate movement, which opened the way for a movement to reform education in the United States, Europe, and later Asia. Some of the major works published by him during this period are: "*School and Society*" (Dewey, 1899). These are the first works of J. Dewey to express new philosophies and perspectives on education. In this work, he offers a new approach to education by encouraging students to participate in practical activities and experiences through which children's intellectual development is developed.

Dewey's work "*Democracy and Education*" (Dewey, 2024) is considered a "summary of educational philosophy." In it, he affirmed the philosophy of considering education as life itself, clarifying that education's nature, function, and goal are human development and contributing to a democratic society.

The work "*How We Think and Selected Essays*" (Dewey, 1978) has affirmed the role of education in training learners' thinking and the importance of interaction between people, between learners, and the environment in developing thinking.

Dewey's "*The School and Society and The Child and the Curriculum*" (2013) explores the interrelationship between educational institutions and societal development, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning. This work, published by the University of Chicago Press, highlights Dewey's progressive approach to education, where he advocates for a curriculum that evolves based on the needs and experiences of children. Dewey argues that schools should be microcosms of society, preparing students to be active and engaged citizens through practical, hands-on learning opportunities.

In general, Dewey's works show an experimental approach to education, upholding the spirit of respecting academic freedom, respecting learners in the educational process, and promoting the spirit of education, linking theory with practice and education through practice to develop learners' intellect. His philosophy and views in these works are still fresh to this day, attracting the attention of educational researchers. This is also an essential document for anyone preparing to venture into the field of education and be active in this field.

Dewey's ideas are expressed in the documents and implemented by him in the Experimental School (Dewey School) practice in Chicago from 1896 to 1904. In addition, his educational thought is enthusiastically expressed in contemporary educational debates. All these efforts of J. Dewey have contributed to changing the shape of his educational philosophy and viewpoint, drastically changing contemporary educational thought, and affecting the educational reform process in the US, Europe, and Asia, including Vietnam.

Dewey's philosophy of education, which is attached to life, has generated heated debates, and many studies have been conducted on it.

"*Advancing the ideas of John Dewey: A look at the high tech schools*" by Pieratt, J. R. (2010) has shown the efforts of some educators in applying John Dewey's educational philosophy to technology schools, thereby demonstrating the great applicability of this theory.

The author Miovska-Spaseva S. (2016) in "*The Educational Theory of John Dewey and its Influence on Educational Policy and Practice in Macedonia*" gives an overview of Dewey's educational philosophy and the impact of his educational philosophy in Macedonia since the Second World War: from

misunderstanding, not paying attention, not promoting the presence of traces in the official education policy documents of the former Socialist Republic of Macedonia and the current Republic of Macedonia.

Author Latasha H., in the article "*John Dewey: A Look at his Contributions to Curriculum*" (2020), has analyzed Dewey's educational philosophy from an empirical perspective in detail, from the educational needs of children to building a curriculum that meets the requirements of each individual. At the same time, the article affirmed the value of Dewey's philosophy in the current global education reform.

The article "*Educational philosophy of John Dewey and his main contribution to education*" by Dar R. A. (2021) summarizes Dewey's educational philosophy in a comparative approach to traditional education. It affirms that the education that Dewey initiated trains individuals with mature thinking, critical thinking, and social attachment. J. Dewey is considered the founder of a philosophical approach to education.

The research overview of Dewey's educational philosophy examines the evolution of his ideas in the context of contemporary educational challenges, highlighting their applicability to current teaching practices. Dewey emphasizes experiential learning and democratic education, showcasing how these principles remain vital in fostering critical thinking and active citizenship in the digital age. By analyzing recent implementations and outcomes, the research provides a comprehensive assessment of Dewey's enduring impact on educational reform efforts worldwide, particularly in integrating technology and collaborative methodologies. The survey reveals numerous studies on John Dewey, primarily focusing on clarifying his educational ideas and their application in developed countries such as the United States and Europe. This article does not attempt to cover all aspects of Dewey's educational philosophy. Instead, it focuses on his concept of education as life, offering suggestions for applying this philosophy to contemporary Vietnamese education.

### 3. Methods

The article uses the comprehensive principle, the historical principle-specific, and the principle of development to study the psychology of considering education as Dewey's life itself. On that basis, it clarifies some practical and theoretical conditions affecting the formation of this philosophy and the expression of philosophy in Dewey's conception of roles, essences, and goals of education. The article also affirms the value of the philosophy of considering education as life itself with the current educational innovation in Vietnam. The article uses the following research methods: Logical and historical methods, analysis and synthesis methods, and comparative methods. The article uses logical and historical methods to approach the philosophy of considering education as the life itself of J. Dewey, thereby elucidating the logical system in Dewey's educational philosophy. The article uses the method of analysis synthesis to

search and analyze arguments, arranging and synthesizing the arguments for Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life. The primary contents and general problems in Dewey's educational philosophy are drawn from there. The article uses a comparative method to see the similarities, differences, suitability, and inappropriateness of Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life and the current educational practice in Vietnam. From there, it suggests the values of philosophy for Vietnamese schooling today.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Conditions and premises for the formation of J. Dewey's educational thought

John Dewey's educational philosophy emerged from the confluence of several intellectual traditions, notably the idealistic and dialectical thought of G.W.F. Hegel and the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James.

*Firstly*, G.W.F. Hegel's influence on Dewey cannot be overlooked. Hegel's philosophy initially drew Dewey towards a career in philosophy, providing him with a foundational framework. Despite Dewey's critique of Hegel's ideas for impeding the pursuit of empirical accuracy, Hegel's thoughts left a lasting imprint on Dewey in several ways: his commitment to the philosophical path, his rejection of static formal logic, and his understanding of history's automatic development and intergenerational connections (Garrison, 2021). Dewey embraced Hegel's view that education is not merely the transmission of material achievements and knowledge but a process of human formation grounded in understanding past experiences (Field, 2019).

*Secondly*, the profound influence of Charles Sanders Peirce, a significant American philosopher and founder of pragmatism, on Dewey's thought is evident. During his doctoral studies, Dewey was primarily influenced by Peirce's pragmatism as a scientific method for establishing beliefs to guide human actions toward achieving goals. Peirce's pragmatism emphasizes that belief is central to thought and action, which is a significant part of the evolution of philosophical ideas (Misak, 2019). He stated, "Faith is what one borrows to prepare for action" (Misak, 2019, p. 321). For Peirce, the thinking process begins with skepticism arising from new truths or environments, leading to attempts to establish new beliefs. This cycle of skepticism and belief formation underpins human cognition and activity (Hookway, 2019).

Peirce's advocacy for the scientific method to establish beliefs significantly shaped Dewey's philosophy. Peirce viewed pragmatism as a scientific approach grounded in experience and empirical verification. He argued that beliefs formed through this method are reliable because they can be tested against practical outcomes (Misak, 2019). Peirce's emphasis on the practical consequences of ideas and

his assertion that "the final result of thinking is the practice of will" influenced Dewey's approach to education and cognition (Hookway, 2019).

Peirce's views on the nature of meaning and truth further impacted Dewey. Peirce contended that the meaning of a concept is tied to its practical consequences and that the truth is established through empirical testing. This perspective led Peirce to a form of relativism, suggesting that beliefs are inherently temporary and subject to revision. Despite this, Peirce's focus on practical utility and empirical validation resonated with Dewey, informing his pragmatic approach to education (Garrison, 2021). Additionally, William James's functional psychology and pragmatic philosophy **profoundly impacted** Dewey. James argued that human consciousness and psychological activity are functions of brain activity adapting to circumstances (Menand, 2020). This view reinforced Dewey's understanding of education as a dynamic, adaptive process. James's pragmatic method further shaped Dewey's educational philosophy, which evaluates ideas based on practical outcomes. James posited that truth is defined by its practical value, asserting that "thoughts become true only because they help us to relate fully to the other components of experience" (Richardson, 2019).

Dewey adopted and developed James's idea that thought is a problem-solving tool, emphasizing the instrumental nature of cognition. This perspective is central to Dewey's educational theory, which views education as a process of inquiry and experimentation to solve real-world problems. Dewey believed that learning should be grounded in practical activities that engage students and help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Garrison, 2021).

In conclusion, John Dewey's educational philosophy was shaped by the intellectual traditions of Hegelian idealism and pragmatism, particularly the thoughts of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. Dewey's synthesis of these influences led to a unique educational approach that emphasizes empirical inquiry, practical utility, and the dynamic, adaptive nature of learning. This philosophy emerged in response to the social realities and intellectual currents of late 19th and early 20th-century America, reflecting Dewey's commitment to creating an education system that fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning.

#### 4.2. J. Dewey's Thought on "Education"

J. Dewey was the most influential pragmatist. His philosophical thought and extensive educational career dominated American intellectual life throughout the twentieth century. Over his long career, Dewey developed a philosophical theory advocating for integrating theory and practice, which he actively tested in his work, particularly as an educational reformer.

Dewey's educational philosophy stemmed from his deep concern for people and society, reflecting an educational philosopher's responsibility toward real-life issues. He demonstrated the courage to acknowledge the dangers facing individuals and a resolute attitude to overcome these challenges.

#### ***4.1.1. Definition of "education" according to J. Dewey's concept***

John Dewey conceives that "education in the broadest sense is the means of maintaining social continuity" of human beings (Dewey, 2024). He understands "education" in terms of "transmission," meaning that "not only teaching and learning in society, but the process of members living together in society itself is learning" (Dewey, 2024). Thus, Dewey's concept of education extends beyond formal schooling to encompass a broad, comprehensive scope. This is reflected in the following two key points:

First, according to Dewey's approach, "educational theory is considered in the most common aspects" (Dewey, 2024). He views education as cultivating basic, spiritual, and emotional tendencies. Dewey sees education as a "laboratory," a miniature society where educational ideas are concretely expressed and tested. Education is not about applying pre-existing ideas but engaging in practical activities that form knowledge and experience for learners.

Second, Dewey asserts that "educational theory, like educational practice, is carried out deliberately" (Dewey, 2024). For him, the reconstruction of education and social ideals are intertwined. Practical changes necessitate educational reform in response. Therefore, every educational philosophy must address the following core questions: What is the ultimate goal of education? What guiding principles should be followed to achieve that goal? And by what methods?

Dewey's educational thought rejects traditional education. He advocates that education is not merely a communication process but life itself; the school should not be isolated from society, and students should be at the center of the educational process.

#### ***4.1.2. Dewey's Criticism of Some Educational Philosophies and Theories***

Before clarifying his educational thought, J. Dewey researched and criticized several educational philosophies and historical theories.

*First, Dewey criticizes some educational philosophies in history.*

He affirms that educational philosophy has developed through three historical periods, each with a particular social significance. However, all three philosophies limit education from achieving this goal.

*First*, the ancient Plato-style philosophy of education holds that the task of education is to discover human beings' natural talents and gradually train them for social purposes (Dewey, 2024). However, only in an ideal society can education bring the correct standards. Plato saw the immense social role of education in discovering and developing personal competence but was limited in not acknowledging the diversity and incomparability of the human ego.

*Second*, the philosophy of education in the style of "individualism" in the eighteenth century acknowledged the diversity of individual aptitudes and required the free development of individual aptitudes. It was "Education in harmony with nature." However, this education is wrong from the starting point, when simply leaving everything to the randomness of circumstances means denying the concept of education itself, ignoring the role of the state and society.

*Third*, the educational philosophy belongs to the country and society in the nineteenth century. This educational philosophy considers education a civic function to realize the nation-state's ideal; education aims to train citizens for a "State," not to train "people." Accordingly, the educational process is considered a process of discipline training rather than personal development. In the end, this philosophy erroneously narrows the social goal of education, and at the same time, it brings back the view of the individual's dependence on existing institutions.

*Second, Dewey's criticism of some educational theories*

*First*, educational theory considers education preparation for life. This notion holds that children are born ready for the responsibilities and privileges of adult life. According to J. Dewey, this is a misconception. It does not see education as a continuous growth process but as the result. This concept makes learners lose motivation to promote the learning process, wasting children's dynamism and initiative.

*Second*, the theory considers education as the disclosure of potential capacities to achieve a clear goal. The purpose here is conceived as a fixed and unchanging completion and completion. On the surface, this view is similar to development, but it lacks meaning for self-interest. Therefore, this reasoning only contradicts the view that education is preparation.

*Third*, the theory considers education as the training of specific abilities and capabilities. This idea implies that capacities in their raw form existed in the human mind before education. Education focuses on training the faculties of the mind until they become habits. According to J. Dewey, this theory is wrong in that it assumes that human abilities are acquired by training. This "training" is identified with a



*selective* response and *specific coordination* of different organs and departments in a response with little spiritual or educational character.

*Fourth*, the theory considers education as training from the outside. According to this theory, education is the training of the mind by providing links or connections about content based on content presented from the outside. Education takes place by imparting knowledge and professional training; it depends on something that is having an *impact from the outside*. The fundamental limitation of this theory is that it deliberately ignores the existence of dynamic and specific activities in a human being. It underestimates the role of unconscious and life-related attitudes.

*Fifth*, the theory regards education as repetition and retrospection. This argument contains many irrationalities regarding education as a biological and cultural repetition. Actual development lies in repeating the evolution that has taken place in the past, each generation merely repeating the life of the previous generation. The task of education is to help children not have to experience the past again, ignoring the dominant influence of the current environment on children, that is, abandoning the function of education (Dewey, 2024).

*Thus*, in history, many educational philosophies and theories have influenced the educational practice of the United States in the early twentieth century. According to J. Dewey, those educational philosophies and theories have advantages and disadvantages. Many disadvantages can have disastrous consequences in the career of training people. Since then, J. Dewey has built his educational philosophy, which serves as the basis for orienting a new education that we later call the New Education Movement.

#### **4.1.3. *The essential content of J. Dewey's philosophy of considering education as the life itself***

*Firstly, Dewey's conception of the role and importance of education*

J. Dewey affirmed the immense role of education in building people and developing society. His overarching thought was that education is an inevitability of life. Education is the only means to convey cultural experiences and values between generations, thereby ensuring society's survival and continuous development. Education is also the primary means of communicating society's standard requirements to create consensus among its members.

*First*, education is the only means to transmit cultural experiences and values between generations, ensuring that society is maintained and continuously developed. *Life*, understood by J. Dewey in two senses, in a biological sense, is that the organism seeks to use the energy of the surrounding environment, turning that energy into a means to preserve itself. If, in the process, the organism expends less energy than it gains, it means that the organism is "growing." Man is a higher creature who can conquer and

control energies to serve his continuous existence. From there, J. Dewey concluded: "Life is a process of self-restoration by impacting the environment" and "constantly adapting to the environment for the needs of living organisms" (Dewey, 2024).

*Survival* is understood as the accumulation of personal experience and community experience in life. For humans, it is the process of recreating the beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, unhappiness, and habits of individuals and social groups. Therefore, "education, in the broadest sense, is the means of maintaining social continuity" (Dewey, 2024), maintaining the continuity of experiences in the community and society.

For each individual, no one escapes the law of being born and must die, so education is even more inevitable to maintain social continuity and the community's typical life. Therefore, educating children - the future and only owners of society - is urgent and inevitable. The more society develops and the higher the civilization, the wider the gap between children's initial abilities and the norms and customs of adults. Therefore, the child cannot be taught only the bare minimum of skills but "requires more deliberate effort and hard brainstorming" (Dewey, 2024). However, when it was born, it was unaware of the importance of interests, purposes, and the rules and requirements of the community. Therefore, "education, and only education, can fill that gap" (Dewey, 2024).

Therefore, education must not only stop at spontaneous education but must be intentional, "substantive, and continuous." Otherwise, even a civilized community will inevitably return to a barbaric state. Because, in fact, children, if left to develop spontaneously without the guidance of adults, cannot learn the elementary skills to survive physically. That is biologically speaking, so how difficult would it be to talk about all the technological, artistic, scientific, and moral achievements of mankind? Therefore, education is an even more inevitable part of life.

*Second*, education is also a primary means of communicating the standard requirements of society in order to create consensus among members. According to J. Dewey, "communication is a process of sharing experiences between two parties until both parties understand the common experience. That communication process will change the attitude of the two parties involved" (Dewey, 2024). According to J. Dewey, only when people share everyday things such as goals, beliefs, hopes, knowledge,... They have an empathy and consensus on these *everyday* things to form society. Moreover, education and communication are the ways to bring them to occupy those common points. Communication helps them be aware of the common purpose, think about the common purpose, and adjust their actions accordingly, forming a community, a group of "authentic society." In that sense, all communication in life is

educational. As a result, each side expands its experience, and society continues to evolve in diversity and vibrancy.

*Third*, in educational methods, J. Dewey emphasizes the role of school education in maintaining social consensus and, therefore, social life.

According to J. Dewey, in society, there are always two modes of education: out-of-school education (education in the process of people living together takes place relatively continuously in social, economic, family, political, legal, and religious institutions) and school education (intentional education for children). However, the school education method is self-explanatory, urgent, and necessary. Because our purpose in interacting with children is to teach them the necessary competencies to participate in life together, in that sense, society needs education to be carried out directly by teachers or through schools, which is especially true as human civilization develops.

According to J. Dewey, as civilization develops, complex professions appear, requiring high abstraction. Children need to be taught and trained to do that job. "To do this training, people come up with the means used for teaching, that is, the school and the materials used to teach, that is, the subjects. The teaching work is completely assigned to a group of dedicated people" (Dewey, 2024). It is formal education, purposeful teaching, and learning.

However, intentional education also contains risks. That is the risk of academic and school education, which quickly becomes illusory and dry, abstract and theoretical. This is even more true for education in civilized countries. When most of the knowledge is stored in the form of highly specialized symbols, it is not easy to find a corresponding connection between knowledge - work and familiar objects. Education has become a means of spreading issues separate from life and imparting knowledge through verbal signals: learning to read and write. Without this education, the school will not receive a long-term consensus from society. To do so, promoting a theoretical education associated with practice is necessary.

Thus, by emphasizing the importance of education, J. Dewey wants to affirm the inevitable requirement of building an education that combines theory with practice. To do that, we must start with the educational philosophy.

*Second, Dewey's conception of the nature of education*

Dewey's thought throughout is to consider "education as creation." In essence, he said, education is a process of continuously reconstructing and enriching experiences, thereby creating a person's capacity to control or control, improving people's capacity so that their actions can be most beneficial.

Education always has a direct purpose: to transform experience's character directly. At the level of education, every stage of life is evaluated equally, and what is *learned* at any stage of experience becomes the value of that experience, "the main task of life at all times is to make that ongoing life contribute to the enrichment of the recognizable meaning of the life" (Dewey, 2024). From here, J. Dewey came to a professional definition of education: "the reconstruction or reorganization of experience to add meaning to the experience, and to improve the ability to control the course of the experience that follows" (Dewey, 2024).

*First*, education creates or reorganizes experiences to add meaning to them. That is, education increases the ability to recognize the connections and continuity of the activities in which we participate. All activities always start in an impulsive form. However, what activity contains education, which contains communication, that activity makes us realize certain connections that we could not recognize before.

*Two*, "an educational experience always creates an additional capacity for control or control afterward" (Dewey, 2024). A person who understands what he intends to do can reasonably anticipate what will happen, including some consequences. Therefore, he must be prepared in advance so that his actions can be beneficial and prevent unwanted consequences.

Thus, an educational experience always involves transferring knowledge and improving capacity, helping people to better adapt to the surrounding environment.

According to J. Dewey, if the school sets rules for students to act in a way that even after completing the work, they still do not recognize the connection between the results and the method they pursue. In essence, such behavior is not educational. On the other hand, mechanical operation, according to rigid habits, can bring good skills to a *particular* job. To that extent, this action can have an educational effect. However, it does not help to recognize more connections; it restricts rather than expands meaning – vision. As the environment changes, previous habits of immutable and isolated behavior become disastrous.

Dewey's concept of education differs from the above in that it identifies the purpose (result) with the process, which is the continuous reconstruction of experience, making the experience more prosperous. Considering education as a continuous reconstruction, J. Dewey affirmed that "the reconstruction of experience can be social as well as personal." In a less changing society, education helps children understand "the soul of the social community they are a member of," helping children catch up with adults regarding capacity and resources. The creation of social experience is social. In a period of daily social change, society seeks to influence the experience of young people not to recreate existing

habits but to improve ones, and in doing so, the society of the future itself must be more progressive. In that progressive society, the role of education has become even more critical. Since education is a deliberate human means of eliminating the apparent evils of society, it is used to guide young people to follow paths that do not produce evil things. Education is a tool to realize people's good hopes. Thus, the potential effect of education as a constructive mode of social progress is to create the development of children and youth and the future social development of which children and youth are members.

*Third, Dewey's conception of the goal of education*

According to J. Dewey, the goal of education is the social effect it brings, which is to train citizens to have the capacity to carry out their rights and obligations.

J. Dewey said that people often confuse goals with results for a long time. The goal is only to anticipate the consequences of our efforts regarding the things around us. Anticipating possible consequences will make a man more thorough and complete in his observation of nature and the difficulties that man faces and make him plan for a specific sequence of actions.

J. Dewey comes to the concept of "educational goals" from the above concept of goals. According to J. Dewey, it is absurd for a teacher to set "his own" goals as the real purpose of children's development, which is no different from a farmer setting a crop plan despite the conditions. Each child has a unique characteristic. Therefore, the goals of adults (parents, teachers) will be changed indefinitely. Different children have different goals, goals that change as children grow and change with the growth of the teacher's experience. We are forced to admit that educational goals are not aimed at but only "suggestions on how to observe, how to look ahead, and how to make decisive choices in the process of liberation and taking advantage of specific situations" (Dewey, 2024).

Understanding the educational objectives above, we can point out some requirements when formulating educational objectives. First, they must be based on the activities and internal needs of the individual who is being educated. Avoid goals considered preparation or goals the same for all children (Dewey, 2024). *Second*, it must be transformed into a method of cooperation with learners' activities. It must suggest the environment necessary to release and organize the learner's capacities. *Third*, we must be wary of goals considered general, vague, and detached from the specific context.

In short, *the true goal of education is social efficiency*. It is the development of human capacity. This development is assessed based on the individual's activities and achievements in community life. Social efficiency is achieved by actively using the individual's abilities in socially meaningful jobs. The essential

elements of social effectiveness include the ability to sympathize in good faith, to be knowledgeable, to be outraged by anything that divides people that could have been avoided, to be creative and to perceive the arts, to be entertained, to use your free time meaningfully...

Educational objectives such as social efficiency need to set requirements for personal training in the following essential aspects: *First*, it is necessary to train people's professional capacity and help them have means of living; second, it is necessary to help form citizens with good qualities: a friend, an individual in the organization, a law-abiding citizen, etc. *Third*, it is necessary to cultivate a culture for people. According to J. Dewey, "culture means at least something is cultivated, something is ripe" (Dewey, 2024). When we call culture the full development of the personality, it is the same as when we speak of the true meaning of social efficiency. In this something unique to the individual, the noble value of the individual is respected.

Regarding the conditions for achieving educational goals. According to J. Dewey, education aims to create conditions for continuous development for *all* members of society. That can only be done in a democratic society. Democracy is a concept that encompasses moral and idealistic meanings; that is, everyone must serve society, and everyone has the opportunity to develop their abilities. In a democratic society, human relations are equal and mutual, everyone is developed as a human being, and society fully facilitates the re-creation of habits for individuals. In a democratic society, education will create people who know how to share and liberal diverse talents of individuals and educate the individuality and adaptability of each person. Thus, in a democratic society, there is a unity between social efficiency and the noble value of personality.

In short, educational objectives should only be seen as the viewpoints and orientations of specific education issues. The main goal of education is to train a person to exercise the rights and obligations of a citizen. It is considered in three inseparable and unbiased points: professional competency training, enriching personal life as a good citizen, and the development of the individual culturally.

#### ***Fourth, Dewey's conception of the function of education***

In order to achieve educational goals, according to J. Dewey, education needs to perform the following functions: 1. From an early age, forming in children a form of activity that is recognized by society; 2. It is necessary to create a suitable environment to guide people socially and to create conditions for natural human capacities to develop based on cooperation; 3. Create conditions for lifelong human development.

While performing the above functions of education, *schools* need to perform specific functions such as providing an environment that is simplified compared to the social environment, selecting and simplifying existing social practices, thereby directing children to good things, and creating an ample environment for the comprehensive development of children. The most valuable product of education is the tendency to learn from life itself, and it provides specific conditions for everyone to learn. To do so, the *task* of education is critical; in addition to providing all the means of growth, it must be established based on respect for the characteristics of children. Throughout this process, *the role of the teacher* is vital. The teacher is not only a companion walking with the child but also a guide and helper for the child;

J. Dewey affirms that life is development, and the process of development and growth is life. Putting it into the field of education, it means that (i) the educational process has no purpose beyond itself; education is an end in itself; and (ii) education is a continuous process of reorganization, re-creation, and transformation" (Dewey, 2024).

He was more specific: "Because growth has nothing to do with further growth; education does not depend on anything other than further education" (Dewey, 2024). It is nothing new to say that education does not end when students leave school. That is, school education aims *to* ensure the continuity of education by building the capacity to maintain growth. The most valuable product of school education is to create a tendency to learn from life itself, and it provides certain living conditions for everyone to learn in the process of living.

To achieve the above goal, education must respect learners' characteristics. Its job is only to provide the conditions to ensure the growth or fullness of life. Life itself always contains its characteristics, and the task of education is to work with these unique characteristics.

As such, a person's capacity for growth is related to dependence and volatility. These two conditions are most evident when people are in childhood and adolescence. Changeability is learning from experience, which is the condition for forming habits. Thanks to habits, people can control and use the environment for their purposes effectively. Growth is the essence of life, a characteristic of life, so education and growth are one; Education has no purpose other than growth. The value of school education is judged by the extent to which it generates a human desire for continuous growth. Therefore, the task of education is only to provide the maximum means to make that desire a result in real human life.

## 5. Evocative value

Through preliminary research, it can be affirmed that J. Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life has many provocative values for Vietnam today. It can be outlined in some of the following contents:

*Firstly*, for the educational process to take place according to the nature of education, it is necessary to have a correct approach to education. That shows the correct conception of education and teachers' responsibilities in the teaching process. In Vietnam, when it comes to "education," people usually immediately think of "school." "Education" has not been recognized in a broad sense, including creating a civilized, cultural, and democratic social environment that creates favorable conditions for education. Family education has not been paid attention by society to by many parents, especially in rural, remote, and remote areas. This leads society to see education as the work of an organization, and education takes place within the school's doors. This is a traditional mindset that has not been erased in Vietnam.

If, in the social sphere, the burden of education is placed on the school, then in the school, "educating students," people immediately think of "teachers" and their classes. Over the years, the state has tried to improve the quality of education, but the limitation is often referred to as "poor teachers' teaching methods" (Tanaka, 2020). However, if we observe and interview teachers who participate in the teaching process, we can see deeper reasons. That is, education reform in Vietnam is currently being carried out mainly "from the top down" without teachers directly participating in teaching, ignoring the real personality of students. Government reforms have swept teachers into "training" and checking teaching records. Binding regulations on responsibilities gradually make teachers "run after reform," forming the mentality of completing tasks to "maintain work" rather than improving each student's education quality.

The study of Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life suggests that education must attach importance to creating an excellent educational environment where children are active and developing. Therefore, the approach to education must change; it is no longer limited to schools but also the family and social environment. Moreover, because children have different personalities, creating the same educational environment for all children is impossible. In school, it is impossible to have the same plan and lesson plan that applies to all learners.

*Secondly*, the birth, implementation, and development of Dewey's educational philosophy show that each society must have its appropriate educational philosophy with its roles, essences, goals, and functions. By the time America was in the early twentieth century when it was the world's leading country



in terms of economy, it was rising strongly in politics and wanted to expand its power. A pragmatic educational philosophy oriented towards developing a realistic society, not forgetting the individual, is needed to create maximum conditions for bringing benefits and effectiveness. Education is associated with life; education is life itself, and education helps preserve and develop shared values, mainly American spiritual values. In essence, this education must create conditions for each individual to educate himself further and continuously improve; everyone is like that, and society will increasingly progress. The goal of education is towards social efficiency, helping learners to be able to exercise their rights and civic obligations. In that sense, education does not only stop when people leave school, but society needs to create a large environment, performing the function of lifelong education for people. It is a democratic society. The more democratic the society, the more it creates conditions for a truly equal education.

Vietnam is promoting industrialization, modernization, and development in the context of deep international integration and the development of science and technology. To develop, Vietnam is considering education and improving the quality of human resources as the top national policy. Therefore, Vietnam needs to have its educational philosophy. At the same time, when society has changed, Vietnam needs to build itself an appropriate, scientific, and progressive educational philosophy.

*Thirdly*, the study of Dewey's educational philosophy shows that properly evaluating education's role in children's development is essential. In Vietnam today, at the primary and secondary education level, education is mainly considered "knowledge universalization." so that children have the most knowledge and get the highest scores on the exam, thereby entering prestigious higher education institutions. Higher education is seen as a means of developing human resources to serve society. This shows that the evaluation of education's role does not emphasize the development of children's abilities. The failure to properly evaluate the role of education leads to the design of educational activities that are far from the learners' personality, not promoting learners' dynamism, positivity, and creative thinking. Promote the idea that "education is the preparation of life." The education practice in Vietnam shows that the mindset of "education is preparation for life" is still prevalent. This is what J. Dewey has criticized in many of his works.

*Fourth*, the study of Dewey's educational philosophy shows that the inclusive educational philosophy implies determining the goals of education. This goal must ensure orientation and flexibility that can be adjusted to suit reality.

*Fifth*, Dewey's philosophy of considering education as life also has limitations. Studying these limitations and their application in practice also helps to bring lessons to experience with the current

educational innovation process in Vietnam. Some limitations are the tendency to underestimate theoretical thinking and scientific cognitive reasoning, absolutize the social efficiency standards of education, and reject an objective truth and absolute truth, thereby rejecting reflective reasoning; the balance between forms of education, especially family education, has not been assessed,...

The suggestions are highly scientific and practical. They express the idea of building a democratic school that J. Dewey initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century. They are being widely implemented worldwide, mainly in Vietnam.

## Conclusion

John Dewey's ideas hold significant value and serve as a valuable reference for Vietnam today in constructing its educational ideology. His educational philosophy, emphasizing experiential learning and integrating education with life, provides essential insights for contemporary educational reforms. Dewey's focus on learner-centered education, critical thinking, and practical application is particularly relevant for developing an innovative and dynamic educational system in Vietnam. However, while Dewey's educational thought contains numerous scientific principles and practical benefits, Vietnam must adopt these ideas selectively. The unique socio-cultural context and current educational challenges in Vietnam necessitate carefully considering Dewey's philosophy. Integrating his principles with local needs and conditions will ensure the educational reforms are practical and culturally appropriate. By selectively inheriting Dewey's educational philosophy, Vietnam can foster a more engaging and adaptive learning environment. This approach will support the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and lifelong learning among students, aligning with global educational standards and preparing Vietnamese learners for the future. Thus, Dewey's ideas provide a solid theoretical foundation and offer practical strategies for enhancing the quality and relevance of education in Vietnam today.

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