The School and Society: Being Three Lectures

by John Dewey

* A series of lectures given by the philosopher to an audience of parents and others interested in the University Elementary School. (given in April 1899)
* **Lecture 1: The School and Social Progress.** Dewey states that only 5% of children reach high school, and 50% left before completing 5th grade. With the changing of society (Industrial Revolution) He stated a concern about loss of community life, disappearance of role models, and absence of meaningful work for children to perform within the family’s economy (children learning beside their parents: learning through experience).
* Dewey calls for this educational reform of ‘manual training’ in which children are learning through doing and making. (Shop-work, cooking, sewing, art). He made clear that these activities were not used to prepare the children for these specific vocations, but as ways to learn through methods of living.
* **Lecture 2: The School and the Life of the Child.** Dewey has a more concrete example of what this school and curriculum would look like (student-centered). He brings drawings to the lecture to show the audience how his experimental school is set up to benefit the child
* Dewey believes children: wish to communicate with others, wish to make things, and wish to find out about things, and wish to create things. The teacher’s role would determine how these specific interests by the child could be educational (knowledge, discipline, skills).
* **Lecture 3: Waste in Education.** Dewey’s complaint of current education is a lack of connections (cohesiveness?) between the stages of a child’s school career.
* ex.) Kindergarten (play) 🡪 Primary (math and literacy) 🡪 Intermediate (Latin and Greek culture) 🡪High School (prep for university). Different ideals and different methods.
* Dewey’s solution is for schools to resemble the outside world (home, industry, laboratories, etc.) and are connected/clustered together, physically speaking.
* **“**That the Dining-room and kitchen connect with the country…Cooking may be so taught that it has no connection with country life, and with the sciences that find their unity in geography…Through this connection extending into the larger world, the child has his most natural introduction to the study of the sciences. Where did these things grow? What was necessary to their growth? What their relation to the soil? What the effect on different climatic conditions?”
* In my opinion (Ryan), this “experience over theory” curriculum/aims can be compared to Gordon’s Music Learning Theory.

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