

Philosophical Analysis of John Dewey's Book "How We Think" For Education in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: This study aims at showing the importance of educational concept of John Dewey. Thus, this research is expected to provide new insights and significantly contribute to design the education planning according to John Dewey's philosophy. This research uses a descriptive research type method to better understand about John Dewey's concept in education, especially from the book "How We Think." This research results show that John Dewey's education highly prioritizes the intellectual side, unlike what has been accused so far that Dewey's education tends to be more practical and not intellectual. In addition, Dewey's education concept can also have an impact on education in Indonesia. Although this study tries to explore the concept of Dewey's education in the book "How We Think", it is still at a level that is not yet deep. More in-depth research is needed to develop an education concept that can be applied in the education system in Indonesia

KEYWORDS: John Dewey, Thinking, School aim, Indonesian School, role of teacher

I. INTRODUCTION

John Dewey is one of the American educational figures who made a major contribution to the idea of Education. John Dewey was born on October 20, 1859 in Burlington, graduated in 1879 in the field of art at the University of Vermont, then completed his doctorate from John Hopkins University in 1884 on the philosopher Immanuel Kant. There are several prominent thoughts and interests of John Dewey, namely philosophy, psychology and education. John Dewey's own thoughts were influenced by several famous figures, namely: first, George Sylvester Morris. Morris is known as the leading research-oriented philosopher in America. Morris encouraged Dewey's unfortunate disposition to seek truth in the system. Second, Stanley Hall. He was a student of William James during his doctoral education at Harvard. From Hall, Dewey learned psychology and also James' pragmatism through Hall. Hall's focus on experimental psychology appealed to Dewey, who had been fascinated at the University of Vermont by Huxley's physiology and Spencer's psychology. Third, Charles Sanders Peirce. His specialty was "philosophic logic." Peirce was intensely absorbed with mathematical logic and the application of scientific methodology to logical analysis (Martin 2002). Because of that, Dewey was finally known as a pragmatist, progressivist, educator, philosopher, and social reformer (Williams 2017).

Not just mere theories and ideas, in 1896 Dewey started a laboratory school at the University of Chicago. The main purpose of establishing the school was to test his ideas in education and practice teaching children. (Durst 2010). This shows that he was very interested in education. Through his ideas and actions, Dewey believed that everyone has a responsibility to make the world a better place to live through education and social reform (Gutek 2014).

John Dewey's thought is certainly not free from criticism that questions his concept of education. Mortimer J. Adler criticised Dewey's education for focusing more on the individual in relation to the social environment and less on the intellectuals of the students. Similar to Adler, Robert M. Hutchins criticised Dewey's thinking for not giving students a philosophical and intellectual foundation. This is echoed by Hirsch, who argues that the weakness of Deweyan education is that students do not have, or lack, a strong intellectual foundation (Neubert 2012; Zeinu Hassen 2023; Luntley 2016). Why is that? Because for Dewey, the idea of education is driven by an intrinsic social, cultural and democratic connection. (Bulle 2018).

In view of these criticisms, the question arises: is Dewey's educational thought lacking in intellectual aspects? Is Dewey's thought only suitable for practical education without touching intellectual values? Is this thought suitable for application in Indonesia? These questions will be answered by exploring and elaborating Dewey's thought.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dewey's ideas can be seen in his works, namely: Interest in Relation to the Training of the Will (1896), My Pedagogic Creed (1897), The Child and the Curriculum and the School and Society (1899), How We Think (1910), Democracy and Education (1916), Schools of Tomorrow (1915), Human Nature and Conduct (1922), Art as Experience (1934), The Public and Its Problems

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(1927) (Thorburn 2018). Dewey's thinking through his books shows that Dewey is strongly influenced by the pragmatist way of thinking. This underlies the idea that the education he initiates must be of benefit to the community or the surrounding environment (Wasitohadi 2014).

Schreier mentions that Dewey was very influential in the project of intellectualising practical matters. He mentioned that Dewey used reason as a tool to bring solutions to practical problems. Furthermore, for Dewey, human intelligence is a means of survival. In terms of politics, Schreier noted that for Dewey, both men and women must be active participants in the decision-making processes that shape them. For Dewey, human beings must develop a society that allows individuals to grow through their participation in social life (Schreier 2015).

Furthermore, Rolfe posits that Dewey advanced the concept of learning through experience. However, experience is not merely a passive occurrence; rather, it is a process that necessitates reflection. The notion of "learning through experience" entails establishing a dynamic interplay between one's actions and the subsequent outcomes, whether positive or negative. In this context, undertaking a task becomes an experimental endeavor, a means of understanding the world and its nuances. Living a particular experience becomes an educational journey, one that illuminates the intricate relationship between action and consequence (Rolfe 2014). In addition, the elements that play an important role for human beings to discover truth and experience growth are experience and method. In human life, experience serves to determine the truth and method is the means to achieve it. In this case, experience is not absolute and subject to change, so truth is not absolute and subject to change. That is why life is not a final goal but a temporary goal, because the experiences a person has in his life are not fixed, not absolute and subject to change (Maiaweng 2009). Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum apart from values and commitments. All knowledge, according to Dewey (keeping in mind that it is not synonymous with information), "connects" with people's aims, habits, aspirations, and more. All of the latter, implicitly, harbor moral meaning because they all presume 'this is better than that' or 'this is good and that is bad' or 'it is right to value or do this rather than that.' Summarizing (Hansen 2006).

The idea of experience and method later influenced Dewey's concept of education. According to Dewey, education is an attempt to help students reflect on their experiences and to empower them to make real changes in their lives. Thus, for Dewey, education must have a positive impact on society and the environment. Education that does not contribute to change and growth in society is not education. Education is an opportunity to transform physical and mental capacities according to the values of the community (Ahmad and Rochimah 2021). Dewey's educational thinking starts from the phenomenon of education as he saw it. He saw that in the traditional education system children were forced to memorise, to stick to books, and this made students not subjects but objects. He also saw that traditional education did not relate learning to the real life of the students. This makes schools remote from society. Because of these criticisms, some thinkers see Dewey as focusing too much on practice and not seeing the cognitive side of students. In his concept of education, Dewey separates religion from education (Attick 2006).

In Dewey's concept of education, the educational environment is society, and the best society is a democratic society, because in it there is every opportunity to work. In a democratic society there are no social classes. Everyone has the opportunity to participate and be active in it, and to use their intelligence to the fullest, so that the growth of each individual can take place to the fullest (Maiaweng 2009). In addition, the school is a laboratory for students to learn to live in a democratic society, with the teacher as a participant in guiding the teaching and learning process, not as a person who has full authority to determine everything. Pupils and teachers should be free to decide on the furnishings of their classrooms, and through school children learn the discipline to grow in life with others from their own experience, not from external rules given to them.

In terms of politics, Savage points out that Dewey's pragmatic philosophy is able to resolve many of the problems that arise in politics, namely the dichotomy between contemporary liberals and communitarians. Dewey sees communitarians as focusing on and paying attention to 'the good'. This good is broadly defined as the good life, joy and self-development. Unlike communitarians, liberals pay attention to 'the right' or justice because of the importance of the value of freedom (Savage 2002). What Dewey offers is a defense of the most valued liberal principles of right, and hence justice, as a means to the communitarian perfectionist end. He defends liberal principles not as goods in themselves but as the best means for individual quests for the good life. Dewey's educative community does in fact promote although it does not impose a particular conception of the good. The conception it promotes, however, is a liberal conception of individual autonomy. A Deweyan conception of autonomy is communitarian because it consists of virtues that are a product of personal effort within a context of shared beliefs. Because these liberal virtues critical reflection, creative individuality, and sociability are both the means to and partially constitutive of the good life, they can be used by Dewey to establish a communitarian form of liberal society (Savage 2002). Despite his positive view of the liberal concept, Dewey still believes that democracy is the better of the two (Fott 1991).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research method with a literature review approach. Literature study is all stages using library data collection methods, reading and recording and processing various research materials that are used as references in compiling this study. (Supriyadi, 2017). The reason for using literature study is firstly because this research can only be answered by library research. Both library research is one stage in the preliminary study, to understand the problems as a whole.

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In library research, the method used to collect research data is in the form of library data that has been selected, searched for, presented and analyzed. The literature study here is a literature study without being accompanied by an empirical test. The data presented is data in the form of words that require processing to be concise and systematic. The major book of this research is "How We Think" by John Dewey with others literature to complete the research.

In connection with the above, the data collection carried out in this study comes from books, journals, and all electronic documents as well as other sources of data or information that are relevant to the topic of this research

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Outline Of "How We Think"

John Dewey published the book 'How We Think' in 1910, which was heavily influenced by the Hegelian framework. The book uses material influenced by the psychological sciences, but contains much content on morality, society, democracy, education and philosophy. The book is intended as a guide for teachers on how to train young minds to become ethical leaders in society and scientific explorers of the universe (Martin 2002; Garrison, Jim, Stefan Neubert 2012). The outline of the idea behind the book 'How We Think' is as follows:

Part one, The Problems of Training Thought. In this first chapter, Dewey explains what thinking is, the importance of thinking, the things needed to train the mind, the school conditions suitable for training the mind, and the meaning of mental training (p. 1-67)

Part two, Logical Consideration. In this second chapter, Dewey explains the analysis of a complete act of thought, systematic inference.: induction and deduction, judgment: the interpretation of facts, meaning: conception and understanding, concrete and abstract thinking, and empirical and scientific thinking (p. 68-156)

Part Three, The training of thought. In this chapter Dewey stresses the importance of training the mind. He explains this through several discussions, namely: activity and the training of thought, language and the training of thought, observation and information in the training of mind, the recitation and the training of thought and some general conclusions (p. 157-224).

B. Concept of Education in "How We Think"

The book 'How We Think' outlines the mind and the things that influence the human mind. Within this outline of the thinking process, it can be seen that there are ideas about education that can be found in:

1. The school as a laboratory for the development of the mind.

In this case, Dewey wants to show and refute the accusation that his concept of education is more practical. In this book, Dewey seeks to refute this argument. In Part 1, Chapter 4, Dewey explicitly shows how the role of the school and also the conditions of the school must be built to train the thinking of the students. It is stated that the school in this case functions as a place that gives students the freedom to develop their minds. The mind must be trained with special exercises designed to develop the human mind. This is the function of the school. True training is the development of curiosity, the building of suggestion and the habit of exploration and testing, which increases insight and efficient thinking. What, then, are the conditions of the school that Dewey envisioned? School conditions which affect the thinking of pupils: (1) the mental attitudes and habits of those with whom the pupils come into contact, (2) the subjects studied: leading not to information but to wisdom, (3) the aims and ideals of education (p. 45-50). This idea is a refutation of the charge that Dewey's concept of education does not have a bearing on the intellectual realm. In this case, Endorsing the book in the Psychological Review, James wrote: "Chicago has a School of Thought! a school of thought which, it is safe to predict, will figure in literature as the School of Chicago for twenty-five years to come." Though he never named it as such, James's summary made clear that he saw Dewey's work as a functionalist critique of the cleavage between thinking and action, which is just what Angell implied when he wrote him a few years earlier (Cowles 2020).

2. Curriculum for Educational Development.

In relation to curriculum or materials in school learning, Dewey argues that good materials or curricula are those that encourage students to think critically. Dewey emphasises the relative importance of play and work as physical activities, and the interrelationship between the two is internalised. In play, the primary interest of the players is in the activity of play itself, not in its outcome. In play, a sequence of actions, images and emotions is sufficient. In work, the end result is the primary concern. In addition. The balance between play and work means that we free the mind to follow the process of subject development in its own way, without perceived convictions or arbitrary restrictions. Free mental play is a serious activity. It is a serious way to follow the true nature of curriculum in education. A good curriculum, according to Dewey, should bring joy to the students. Playfulness is a more important consideration than 'play' because playfulness is an 'attitude of mind' whereas play is only a 'temporary outward manifestation of that attitude'. Dewey emphasises attitude over activity

3. The teacher's role in fostering students' thinking process

According to Dewey, teachers must be able to engage students in critical thinking. In practice, Dewey identifies five logically distinct steps (Dewey 1910: 72):

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- a. **A felt difficulty.** Learners question everything about what is happening when they realise that there are difficulties. In this case, Dewey argues that in the first of the three cases cited, the difficulty resides in the conflict between conditions hand and a desired and intended result, between an end and the means for reaching it. The purpose of keeping an engagement at a certain time, and the existing hour taken in connection with the location, are not congruous (Dewey: 72).
- b. **Its location and definition.** In this case, location means that teachers and students know where the difficulties are. This is very important because many teachers or students do not know where the difficulties are, so they cannot be analysed. The next step in finding the difficulty is to define it. This definition makes the difficulty clear. At this stage teachers can identify the object of the difficulty or problem (Dewey: 73).
- c. **Suggestion of possible solution.** At this stage there is a situation where a suggestion arises, which is a belief that accepts the conclusion but is still tentative because it will be tested further. Suggestion in this case is the same as assumption, conjecture, guess, hypothesis and in elaboration with theory (Dewey: 75).
- d. **Development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion.** The next stage is to develop reasons based on the set of suggestions. This process is called reasoning. Reasoning has the same effect on the proposed solution, but is more in-depth and based on the actual problem. Suggestions in this stage are more factual than in the Suggestion stage (Dewey: 76)
- e. **Further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.** At this stage there is proof of what has been theorised through real experience. This shows that if the idea is accepted, then there are definite consequences that will be implemented. Observation in this case is at the beginning of the process and also at the end of the process. At the beginning, to gain more certainty about the nature of the difficulties encountered, while at the end, to test the value of the hypotheses that lead to conclusions (Dewey: 77).

The evidence of the logical steps that teachers must go through and practise in schools shows that Dewey did not neglect the importance of the intellectual. Accusations that Dewey's concept of education emphasises practice are certainly refuted by Dewey's realities and ideas in How We Think.

C. Implications of Dewey's thinking in the book "How We Think" for education in Indonesia

Dewey's ideas and concepts about education, especially in the book 'How We Think', can have implications for education in Indonesia. There are several ideas that can be given, namely:

1. Indonesian schools as laboratories for development of tolerance

Dewey asserts that school is a place specifically designed to develop the human mind. This mind is very important to human beings because it is through the mind that human beings are able to anticipate events that will occur. Given the importance of the mind, schools are also ideal places to inculcate good values, especially the idea of tolerance. This is especially important as Indonesia is home to 237 million people from different religions, ethnicities, tribes, languages and cultures. This can be done by prioritising: (1) School culture: in this case, schools should promote relevant values, namely: non-violence, compassion, equality, sustainability, tolerance and respect for human rights (Sumaryono and Sugiyono 2019), (2) Developing school management and leadership: this is very important because good leadership can encourage pupils to act positively (Suryadi et al. 2022), (3) There is a good relationship between teachers and students. It is a relationship of mutual respect to avoid things that humiliate the teacher or vice versa humiliate the student.

2. Critical thinking curriculum development

In the midst of openness and the internet age, all information can spread quickly and be accessed by anyone. Problems arise when much of the news spread on social media does not correspond to reality. This is why critical thinking skills, which are taught to students at an early age, are so important. In primary and secondary schools, students are expected to be able to **Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS)** (Linda and Lestari 2019). The LOTS level of cognition in basic education in Indonesia is at the level of remembering, understanding and applying. Of the three levels of cognition, it is necessary to include critical thinking to equip students to face the development of an increasingly advanced world.

3. The role of teachers in Indonesia capable of developing mindsets

Teachers play a strategic and very important role in developing the mindset of students at school. Therefore, it is necessary to use the right method. In this case, the use of cooperative learning methods has been proven to improve students' critical thinking skills. Some methods that can be applied are the TPS (Think-Pair-Share) method, scientific approach, social inquiry, problem-based and/or project-based learning, collaborative or cooperative and active-participative methods, increasing interaction between students, asking open-ended or innovative questions that can trigger students' thinking skills. The most fundamental thing is to believe that students can develop their intelligence in critical thinking in the classroom (Komalasari, Ridwan, and Alfarisa 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

John Dewey's concept of education, especially in his book 'How We Think', presents concepts that are full of intellectual content. With this discovery, criticism of Dewey's concept of education, which emphasises more on practical matters, can be refuted

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through this research. In addition, this research is also useful to show the relevance of Dewey's concept of thinking to the development of critical thinking. This is certainly also useful in developing Dewey's concept of education in the current educational situation, considering that training the mind will continue to be relevant in the future. Dewey's concept of education is still very relevant to be developed in schools, to build a curriculum in schools and to train teachers who have the ability to teach critically. Although this research attempts to explore the concept of Dewey's education in the book 'How We Think', it is still at an in-depth level. More in-depth research is needed to develop the concept of education that can be applied in the education system in Indonesia.

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