

# THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ITS EVOLUTION IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Oana Camelia IACOB\*, Elena GROZA\*\*

***Abstract.** Like all histories they are comprised of multiple schools of thought that are all essentially derived or made real from one primary origin, the human psyche. These origins are derived from three components: anthropological, psychological, and philosophical. Any study that attempts, in the researcher's opinion, to separate definitively the three origins distinctly from each other is likely often an exercise in futility. The three will often intersect between them leaving a cognizance that they cannot be separated because they originate from the one primary locus, humanity.*

***Keywords:** new economy, American School, reforms, American education.*

## Introduction

The idea of moving to the elaboration of "education for change" came into being since 1926, being launched by W.E. Kilpatrick, but only in the last 10-20 years has he had more followers. The history of the American education system shows us its adaptation to the current, global phenomena that have occurred. This is discussed in the following, because the school, the place where education is completed, must be the central place of change, including the change of mentalities: young people must be prepared to participate in real economic life.

## 1. Philosophical context

### 1.1. Ancient origins

A philosophy of education involves discussion of the aims of education with the context of metaphysical, epistemologically, moral, and

---

\* University lecturer, University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest, oanacamelia.i@gmail.com

\*\* Ph.D. Student, Valahia University, Targoviste, ggrozaelena@yahoo.com

political considerations. All work in philosophy of education must ultimately be measured against the standard of excellence established by Plato (427-347 B.C.), the first systematic philosopher to work in this field of education.

The Meno dialogue is a superb introduction to a number of central issues in the philosophy of education. Among these issues are the following: (a) Can virtue be taught? (b) How is it possible for a person who has been taught what is right, to act contrary to the principles he has learned? What is the Socratic method of teaching and how effective is this method. Plato, in Meno, asked Socrates whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practicing, or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?". Not unlike Plato, Aristotle (384-324 B.C.) contemplated the phrase "virtue is knowledge." Aristotle's conclusion was intellectual virtue is acquired by teaching whereas moral virtue is acquired by practice.<sup>1</sup>

### *1.2. The age of reason*

The first movement of the early modern period that influenced education was a revolt of the intellectuals against the superstition and ignorance that dominated people's lives at the time. This movement became known as the Age of Reasons (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries). François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire) (1694-1778) was one of the leaders of this movement and placed (instead of superstition and ignorance) credence on human rational power. If one places greater emphasis on human ability to reason, education takes on a new importance as the way by which humans can develop this power.

René Descartes (1596-1650) Descartes and Voltaire's work resulted in three axioms. a. Reason was supreme. b. The laws of nature were invariable, c. The truth was verified by exact methods of testing. Many authorities give Voltaire considerable credit for both the American and French Revolutions, which took place in his lifetime. Fredrick the Great (1712-1786) was a friend of Voltaire and liberal thinker for this time and did not try to force the common people into a particular religion. Fredrick

---

<sup>1</sup> Cahn, M. S. (1970), *The philosophical foundations of education*, Harper&Row, New York, pp. 5, 6, 7, 105, 133, 153, 177, 201

must be given considerable credit for contributing to the development of schools during the Age of Reason.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick quickly began improving the infrastructure of West Prussia, reforming its administrative and legal code, and improving the school system. 750 new schools were built from 1772-1775. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic teachers taught in West Prussia, and teachers and administrators were encouraged to be able to speak both German and Polish.<sup>3</sup>

### *1.3. The emergence of common man*

The Age of Reason was a revolt of the learned for intellectual freedom, the Emergence of Common Man was a revolt of common people for a better life-politically, economically, socially and educationally.<sup>4</sup>

Following are some of the thinkers that influenced the promotion of the common man.

### *1.4. Influential thinkers*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) Rousseau's most important work on education was *Emile* in 1762. It was a treatise on the education of the whole person for citizenship. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) established two schools for boys in Burgdorf, Switzerland (1800) and Verdun, Switzerland (1805). His motto "Learning by Head, Hand and Heart" is still a key principle in successful 21st-century schools. Thanks to Pestalozzi, illiteracy in 18th-century Switzerland was overcome almost completely by 1830.

Johann Friedrich Herbart (17-1841) of the Herbartian teaching method developed in five formal steps of, Preparation: Preparing the student to receive a new idea; Presentation: Presenting the student with the new idea; Association: Assimilation the new idea with the old ideas; Generalization: The general idea deriving from the combination of the old and new ideas; Application: Applying the new knowledge.

---

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, J. A.; Dupius, V. L.; Musial Hall, G. E.; Gollnick, D. M. (1996), *Introduction to the foundations of American education*, Simon&Schuster Company, Boston, Massachusetts, pp. 305-306.

<sup>3</sup> Fredrick the Great (n.d.) Wikipedia online. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredrick\\_The\\_Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredrick_The_Great)

<sup>4</sup> Cahn, M. S. (1970), *The philosophical foundations of education*, Harper&Row, New York, pp. 5, 6, 7, 105, 133, 153, 177, 201.

John Locke (1632-1704) stated that (1) the need to instill self-discipline in the young; (2) the importance of reasoning with children; and (3) the significance of the development of a student's character, not merely his intellect. Locke states in his book some thought concerning education.

*A sound mind is a sound body, is a short but full description of a happy state in this world: he that has these two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, will be but little the better for anything else. Men's happiness or misery is most part of their own making (John Locke).*

John Dewey (1859-1952) constructed a philosophy comparable to Plato. Plato's philosophy rested on aristocracy and power of pure reason. Dewey rests on democracy and the power of the scientific method.<sup>5</sup>

Dewey considers the scientific method to consist in "observation, reflection, and testing deliberately adopted to secure a settled, assured subject matter." It is the essence of his position that utilization of this method is effective not only in science but in all aspects of life. "Science is experience becoming rational." And rationality or reasonable has proved to be the most relative method of teaching the truth, no matter what the field of inquiry. In short, one acquires knowledge by intelligent action, and the possession of knowledge enables one to act more intelligently.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) provided a number of striking ideas that center upon the child like the insistence that a child be treated as a person in his/her own right, and it stresses the importance of motivating a student to want to learn combines to make this work a landmark in the history of educational thought.

Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) writings in education have been oddly neglected according Cahn. Kant states that the greatest and most difficult problem, to which man can devote his self to, is the problem of education: education that human nature can be constantly improved on.

Cahn states that students may either be "trained" or "enlightened." Animals are "trained"; children must be taught to think or "enlightened." Kant emphasizes the importance of experimentation in education, the advantages of public education, and the fact the "the best way to understand is to do".<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*

<sup>6</sup> Cahn, M. S. (1970), *The philosophical foundations of education*, Harper&Row, New York, pp. 5, 6, 7, 105, 133, 153, 177, 201

## 2. Anthropological context

### 2.1. *The American School and its Mission*

The American public school system was rigorously laid in Massachusetts in 1647, only twenty-seven years after the landing of the Mayflower. Every township with fifty or more householders was required by statute to appoint a teacher of reading and writing. Townships with a hundred or more householders were required to establish a Latin grammar school, an institution brought over from England. The main curriculum objective was to produce God-fearing Christians.

An additional curriculum objective, however, was to promote the welfare of the state by making citizens capable of self-government. In time, this objective was to attain ascendancy as the public school became grounded in secularism.<sup>7</sup>

American schools during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, despite the passage of the Massachusetts laws of 1642 and 1647, were essentially private or church institutions. Such schools were few in number; attendance was usually selective; and control rested in the hands of an individual or church groups. Around 1800, there began a growing demand for public education in America.<sup>8</sup>

As a people, we have always believed that through education not only could we produce literate, enlightened, responsible, and productive citizens, but we could also establish a society where freedom, equality, and fraternity could be guaranteed for all regardless of sociocultural, religious, and racial heritages. America's faith in education went beyond this, because schooling was also thought to be the major means of resolving social, moral, and political problems.

The small community district became the unit in which the public school, usually a one-room elementary school, was established. Early state laws permitted school districts to be formed almost anywhere, even if a half dozen families wished to establish one. A community wishing to establish a school and pay taxes to support it could establish one; a community not desiring a school or not wishing to pay taxes for its support could let matters alone. To be sure, as the nineteenth century progressed,

---

<sup>7</sup> Tanner, D.; Tanner, L. (1990), *History of the school curriculum*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 33-36

<sup>8</sup> Campbell, R.; Cunningham, L. L.; Nystrand, R.; Usdan, M. D. (1999), *The organization and control of American schools*, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, pp. 56-65

the states became more adamant about the establishment of public schools and the tax support for them.

The small district pattern of organization, with some modification in the county-unit states of the South and in the cities, remained for that century and even much of the twentieth century the predominant pattern of organization.

Thomas Jefferson, in Virginia, was among the first to propose a system of free public elementary schools. His proposal was not adopted, but a little later, largely as a result of the work of Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Connecticut, the public school movement of America was launched.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps more thoroughly than that of any other person, Horace Mann's attitude toward community is imbedded in the traditions of the American common school. Mann's concept was a modification of the Puritan attitude; some of the same elements, with further modification, are found in the views of John Dewey and James Bryant Conant (1893-1978). As had his ancestors, Mann believed in the absolute necessity of ideological unity in society.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. *The puritan perspective 1647-1870'S*

Because the school viewed itself as a primary facilitator of Americanization, its major mission was to enculturation the children of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) community and to acculturate the children of those who did not have the same heritage. This involved changing not only their behavioral and language patterns but also their belief systems and thinking styles to conform to WASP norms. Americanization meant to help children to learn to think, believe, and behave according to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ways while divesting non-WASP children of cultural practices that differed from the mainstream.<sup>11</sup>

The seventeenth-century school laws in New England did not acknowledge girls at all, stating that "the word children, is interpreted to mean boys.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*

<sup>10</sup> Mc Lendon, J. C. (1966), *Social foundations of education*, MacMillan Company, New York, p. 284

<sup>11</sup> Pai, Y. (1990), *Cultural foundation of education*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 51, 87

The puritans believed themselves to be given a special mission from God.

In spite of some cultural, linguistic, and religious differences, the Americanization of immigrants through education did not pose a serious problem in the Puritan era. This is so because the Puritans were unquestionably convinced that cultural diversity would lead to national disunity and divisiveness in people's beliefs and values.<sup>12</sup>

Colonial views on education were shaped by the theological outlook of Calvinism in New England and the Church of England in the South. The predominant objective and spirit of education was religious, and the view of the child was harsh. The Calvinist concept that the child was innately evil provided the chief method of classroom control. Children were continually reminded, in school and out, of the terrible consequences of sin, death, and damnation. They were regarded as miniature adults and expected to live up to adult standards of religious and moral behavior.

In addition to reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic, children in the colonial period were instructed in catechism. As the view of the child became more liberal and the interests of the people more secular, religious instruction gave way to moral instruction.

The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) did not put an end to educational thought. Instead intellectual and political leaders gave much thought to the role that education should play in the young republic. Education itself was an instrument of the American Revolution. According to Cremin, the movement for independence was a direct outgrowth of the increasing availability of schooling and secularization, not to mention an increasingly literate population whose minds were open to new possibilities. The Revolution fed the idea that all of the people must be provided with educational and cultural opportunity.

Thomas Jefferson saw the continuation of republican government as "absolutely hanging" on the hook of public education. In 1779, he developed a proposal for public elementary and secondary education. He believed a free society cannot survive unless the people in general are educated. Proposed by Thomas Jefferson, The Great Problem is how to educate everybody. The world has never had to face this issue; it will no longer be possible to evade it.<sup>13</sup>

Thomas Jefferson offered the most definite plan for a state school system. In 1779, he and Wythe reported to the Virginia assembly "A Bill

---

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*

<sup>13</sup> Hutchins, R. M. (1968), *The Learning society*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, pp. 4, 6, 11, 31, 51

for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge. Under the plan each county was to be divided into “hundreds” of such size that all children living in this subdivision could conveniently attend the school what was established in each. All free children, girls and boys, were to attend school for three years without paying tuition and for longer than that at private expense if their parents, guardians, or friends thought proper. But the bill failed to pass.

The work of Jefferson and other revolutionary leaders was carried on by Horace Mann of Massachusetts, Henry Barnard of Connecticut, John D. Pierce of Michigan, Calvin H. Wiley of North Carolina, Caleb Mills of Indian and Jon Sweet of California. Each of these men marshaled the forces in his state behind a plan for the development of school open to all children and paid for out of the public treasury.

Hutchins states that in the 1960’s the general assumption was that in order to accommodate different kinds of students, many of them from an alien culture, it would be necessary to abandon the schools for the elite or to dilute them in such a way as to adjust them to the inferior abilities of those who were for the first time insisting on being admitted.

Education in colonial America was closely allied with religion. Most of New England made it obligatory to read the Bible and the laws of the colony. Compulsory education laws were originally formed in 1642 and 1647 in Massachusetts. Early school laws passed by the colonies suggested that education in the beginning was controlled by general government. The general assembly made regulations for education as it saw fit.

A law passed in Massachusetts in 1789 authorized towns to divide themselves into small school districts. In 1827 the districts were empowered by law to select school trustees who were empowered to certify, hire, and fire teachers. This practice made the teacher little better than a vagrant. Tanner states that impossible instructional demands made on them, they must have had to rely heavily on rote methods and on older pupils to provide instruction for the younger ones.

Hard-pressed for time, the teacher raced through the multiple and diverse curricular circuit, using the same method for every learner and for every subject. Pupils were summoned in groups of two, three, or four where they said their lesson in words hurriedly repeated in rote fashion from a book. Within moments they were back in their seats.

Noah Webster Jr. (1758-1843) singlehandedly created two basic ingredients of nationalism were a common language and a common past. The Webster speller (later on called Webster Dictionary) “went triumphantly from generation to generation until it came to be as familiar

as the Bible, and essential”, and “Under it begin guidance generations of young Americans learned the same words, the same spelling, the same pronunciations; read the same stores, absorbed the same moral lessons”.

### *2.3. Early childhood education*

Childhood education, in America, was an act that culminated (significantly) after World War II. It was greatly influenced by two men. Robert Owen (1771-1858), who developed the Infant School in England in 1816, and Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel(1782-1852) who created the Kindergarten in 1817. Both, the Infant School and Kindergarten were both based on their programs of philosophical speculation.

Froebel wrote his main educational book called the “Education of Man” in 1826. Robert Owen was concerned about the development of character in individuals who would inhabit his ideal society. Froebel used his symbolic Kindergarten materials to help young children come to know the basic relationship about man, God and the universe.

G. Stanly Hall (1844-1924), an American, is the name that can also be traced back to early child hood education who studied scientific psychology in Germany. Hall returned to America to begin studying children. In 1880 he conducted a survey of “The Contents of Children’s Minds upon Entering School”.

The contemporary research tradition in early childhood education stems from the work of the 1960’s. Such work began when new views of child development challenged the belief in fixed intelligences and suggested that children could learn more than was expected of them.<sup>14</sup>

### *2.4. Keeping America American 1870-1920S*

The immigrants who reached the shore after 1870 differed markedly from their predecessors, for they came from southern and eastern European countries, Asia, and South American countries.

Schools in America went through many changes during the years from 1870 to the early 1920s, yet the belief that minority cultures represented could be solved through the schooling process. It was during this time that John Dewey brought out his education philosophy that was concerned with eliminating social, class, racial, and cultural differences as

---

<sup>14</sup> Spodek, B. (1993), *Handbook of research on the education of young children*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 1-2.

barriers to building a democratic community in which all could enjoy freedom and equality and in which every individual was valued for his or her intrinsic worth.<sup>15</sup>

In 1830's and 1840's moral education permeated the entire curriculum. The subject matter of textbooks was heavily flavored with morality. And teachers gave lessons in morals and character building.

Educational reforms and friends of the public school based their argument for educating the common people on enlightened self-interest: The common man was the future legislature, judge, and juryman. It was the common folk to whom the interests of people of substance were entrusted.

In the 1850s, it was recognized in all northern states and some of the southern states that "common schools" that is free schools for all children, not just for poor children, were necessary for the well-being of a society with universal manhood suffrage. Tanner stated that this is what the Puritans knew in 1647.

From the start of their campaign for state-supported common schools, reformers stressed that these would have to be good schools or else the pauper tint would remain. This would mean a more up-to-date curriculum and better methods of instruction than those offered by the private schools.

A rather widely accepted curriculum principle throughout the nineteenth century was that children should "complete" the study of a subject, or "learn it thoroughly" before beginning a new subject.

The American Journal of Education pointed out that no curriculum, if it is complete will fail to consider the "whole physical, intellectual, and morel mental power depended on the vigor of the others; if one area was neglected, the other would also suffer.

### *2.5. The Melting Pot Ideal 1920-1965*

During this time the people realized that both native-born Americans and newcomers to the country realized that simple Anglo-conformity was not feasible. According to this view, ethnic difference "melted" into a single "pot" would produce a synthesis – a new homogeneous culture that was not Anglo-Saxon, Jewish, Italian, nor Asia.

President Kennedy stated the nation is committed to greater advancement in economic growth, and recent research has shown that one of the most beneficial of all such investments is education.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Pai, Y. (1990), *Cultural foundation of education*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, p. 87

Hutchins states that The US President, Lyndon B. Johnson lobbied businessmen to support expenditures for education on that ground that they were a good investment. President Johnson highlighted the economic fact that the college graduate would average \$300,000 dollars more in his/her lifetime compared to a man who ceased his studies at eighth grade. Hutchins points out that investment in and expansion of education was the key toward advancing the US in areas of industry and technology.

Hutchins states that national power is contingent on the development and expansion of education. The aftermath of the hydrogen bomb dropped on Hiroshima was evidence of how science and its progress can lead military dominance based on both science and engineering.

Hutchins quotes US President Kennedy's message to Congress which at the time was the Cold War standoff between the US and Russia. Hutchins even goes on that at this time in history educational was viewed as indispensable to industrialization. Education became nearly synonymous with mobilization of industrialization.

During this time, throughout the western hemisphere, families began demanding that States provide obligatory education to their children than that was offered to them. This wave of demands also began to erode the walled entrance way toward higher institutions of learning that were at one time closed to these very families. The government looked upon this movement of furthering education as means toward prosperity and power. It was viewed that those elite schools needed to dumb down its curriculum in effort to meet the needs of students from foreign cultures who were seeking schooling for the first time.

Education is the organized, deliberate, attempt to help people become intelligent. It has insisted that the objective of education is not manpower but manhood. Hutchins claims that Soviet Union and Communist China educational policy was create manpower. Education to the socialist system is to training the manpower and to indoctrinate with the aims of policies of the regime.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Hutchins, R. M. (1968), *The Learning society*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, pp. 4, 6, 11, 31, 51

<sup>17</sup> Hutchins, R. M. (1968), *The Learning society*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, pp. 4, 6, 11, 31, 51

## *2.6. Cultural Pluralism, Democracy and Multicultural Education 1970-1980'S*

The often emotionally charged debates regarding the effectiveness of compensatory education programs and their underlying assumptions about minority cultures in the US reflected deeper, disquieting concerns regarding the extent to which freedom, dignity, and human rights were assured for minority groups in the early 1970s. Even more, education and economic opportunities were open to the poor and ethnic minority. However, the minority groups were convinced that the dominant group attitude toward itself did not change. Cultural pluralism simply meant that cultural diversity exists. Multicultural education is learning to understand other cultures and to interact effectively with their members should be an integral part of the educational goal in any society; In other words, "The process whereby a person develops competencies in multiple systems of standards for perceiving, evaluation, believing, and doing".

American schools are currently engaged in a revolutionary educational experiment. The deliberately planned and legally enforced mixing of pupils of widely divergent racial and cultural backgrounds in all schools and the abandonment of the local neighborhood school to achieve this goal is an unprecedented step in the history of American education. The purpose is to reduce traditional inequalities between schools so that all children may receive an education of equal quality, but especially those who because of skin color, ethnicity, or social-class status have been shortchanged in the distribution of education recourses.

American social classes' exists in our country; however, according to the national credo "no one is supposed to be recognized as any better than anyone else except through his own efforts and abilities". Social mobility is permitted however; the structure of the systems is played down. And the average person is not clear about the structure. They are not, however, impassable barriers that separated them in much of continental Europe and even England of a former day.

The late 1970's, evidence began to accumulate that schools can help children overcome the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage. Nevertheless, not all children have optimum opportunity to learn in schools. As Ralph Tyler has pointed out, access to public schools does not guarantee equal access to a rich curriculum. The practice of grouping and tracking students in the elementary and secondary school has resulted in

large numbers of children being denied access to such a curriculum.” Providing optimal access to knowledge is one the unfinished tasks of American education.

The idea of progress is surely the most influential idea in curriculum history. This is the idea humankind has advanced in the past and is continuing to move in an improving direction. The history of the idea of progress shows that it profoundly influenced education. The dominant objective of progressive educators was profoundly concerned with developing critical thinkers. They wanted to send individuals into society who could control the environment rather than be controlled by it, in direction of a better life if it is directed by human intelligence.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.7. Current education reforms

Education has been near the top of the national domestic agenda since the 1980’s. Reforms were heavy in terms of multiple school-improvement strategies in the 1990’s. There was a push for standards, test based accountability, and effort to expand families’ educational options. In 2004 nearly three thousand charter schools were serving more than 650,000 children across the United States. Despite many reforms, national test scores remained low – and alarmingly flat – even as drop out remained high. International education comparisons yielded periodic evidence that other countries were outstripping the US in academic achievement and, more recently, number of years of schooling.

The 2000 presidential election is where George W. Bush promoted the Lone Star State’s strong accountability program as a national model. This occurred and was coined “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). The NCLB had the federal government required that academic performance had concrete consequences for schools – and that children attending inadequate schools have the opportunity to seek assistance or move elsewhere. What the law’s bipartisan boosters rarely noted, however; that, although the statute was intended to give families in low-performing schools new options, school districts and states retained most of the control over those options.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Tanner, D.; Tanner, L. (1990), *History of the school curriculum*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 33-36

<sup>19</sup> Hess, F. M.; Finn, C. E. jr. (2004), *Leaving no child behind? Options for kids in failing schools*, Palgrave, MacMillan, New York, p. 1

### 3. Psychological aspects

#### 3.1. Beginnings

Progression of American education can be tied into the historical era of American Great Depression (1930's) or in the midst of World War II (1939-1945). It was marked with a spirit of inventory and appraisal and a moment of crisis. The American education consensus was built upon by four formative movements during the last fifty years leading up to the Great Depression and World War II. These formative movements of education, in America, were set upon Public Education, Liberal Education, Progressive Education, and Social Education.

Rugg (1947) is convinced that these centers of thought all bring forth truth, but not absolute truth. Many of thinkers of these formative movements split from one another. However, none could stand on their own instead they each make a definitive contribution to American life and education. Within each of the formal movements one can find also both the obstacles that make up the differences in thought and in turn are the same sources of union.

America was still considered a small country that would eventually take the lead from the infighting of the Europeans. The Great Tradition (transmitting moral values) within education and learning by experience fled to America. The productive and democratic spirit had been sowed in America in part by people who fled Europe. Those who stayed were killed. This philosophy and psychology of experience that matured in the twentieth century was thoroughly American.<sup>20</sup>

#### 3.2. Influential thinkers

Charles Saunters Pierce (1839-1914): Founder of Operation Psychology and the primitive form of the philosophy known as pragmatism or experimentalism.

One of Dewey's central themes was the ultimate aim of production is not the production of goods both production of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality. That includes, of course, education, which was a prime concern of his.

---

<sup>20</sup> Rugg, H. (1947), *Foundation for American education*, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York, pp. 3, 4, 5, 25, 35, 74-75

Burrhus Fredric (BF) Skinner (1904-1990) states that all learning takes place relative to three factors which, collectively, he has labeled (contingencies of reinforcement. Learning requires a situation in which behavior occurs, the actual behavior and the consequences of that behavior. Doing, experience, and the trial and error is representative of the three parts of reason contingencies: doing emphasizes the response; experience, the occasion during which through response occurs, and trial and error, the consequences. Skinner wishes to construct an environment in which the individual is manipulated toward a specific goal, however in a non-coercive manner. Instead of overt threats for undesirable behavior but praising the desirable behavior when it occurs that reinforce the desirable behavior.<sup>21</sup>

B.F. Skinner has written a book, the *Technology of Teaching* (1968), in an effort to apply his theory of human behavior directly to educational practice. He traditionally rejects traditionally used “metaphors” such as “growth or development” “forming, shaping, or building” the individual. Traditional ways are also inadequate by Skinner. Examples are: “we learn by doing”, “we learn by experience”, and “we learn by trial and error”. He does not feel those expressions are wrong but incomplete. They do not fully describe the educational process as defines it.

According to his theory, all learning takes place relative to three factors which, collectively, he has labeled “contingencies of reinforcement.” Learning requires a situation in which behavior occurs: the actual behavior and the consequences of that behavior. Doing, experience, and trial and error are representative of the three parts of a set of contingencies: doing emphasizes the response; experience, the occasion during which the response occurs; and trial and error, the consequence.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987), puts great emphasis upon “the experience person.” Rogers assumes that man is a physical, consciously feeling, experiencing organism that essential that can be summed up as a gut feeling. The implication seems to be that individuals can know something that is not mentally known. It is an “irrational” knowledge which in some way brings the organism closer to reality than knowledge resulting from the mental activity.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Swaim, E. E. (1974), B. F. Skinner and Carl R. Rogers on behavior and education. Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Salem, Oregon, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Swaim, E. E. (1974), B. F. Skinner and Carl R. Rogers on behavior and education. Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Salem, Oregon, p. 14.

Rogers is more a spontaneous approach to education. He sees the good teacher changing constantly, learning with the students and apart from them. He sees the education experience as meaningful to both teacher and students: that is the particular educational experience is significant to the total personal experience of each person.

Dewey seems to have felt that reforms in early education could be in themselves a major level of social change. They could lead the way to a more just and free society, and society in which, in his words, “the ultimate aim of production is not production of goods, but the production of free human beings associated with another on terms of equality. This basic commitment, which runs through all of Dewey’s work and thought, is profoundly at odds with the two leading currents of modern social intellectual life; one strong in his day (1920-1930’s)—is associated with the command economies in Eastern Europe, the systems created by Lenin and Trotsky and turned into an ever greater monstrosity by Stalin; the other, the state capitalist industrial society being constructed in the U.S. and much of the West, with the effective rule of private power.<sup>23</sup>

The goal of education, to shift over to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), is “to give a sense of the value of things other than domination,” to help create “wise citizens of a free community, “to encourage a combination of citizenship with liberty and individual creativeness, which means that we regard “a child as a gardener regards a young tree, as something with certain intrinsic nature, which will develop into an admirable form, given proper soil and light”.

### 3.3. *Five American frontiers of the imagination*

The Human Frontier: The physiological and psychological study of man, his nature and conduct – all as a part of the expanding study of the organic life of the living creature – his health and its betterment through a better agriculture, medicine, hygiene, sanitation, and diet.

The Social Frontier: The study of man and his society, the foundations of every aspect of the culture – its economics, its geography, its anthropology, its sociology, its politics.

The Frontier of the Expressive Arts: The study of man’s esthetic statement of his view of life, and his attempt to portray it through every conceivable medium of expression.

---

<sup>23</sup> Chomsky N. (2000), *Miseducation*, Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, p. 37

The Frontier in Philosophy and Religion: The study of man's objects of allegiance, his methods of inquiry and ways of working – The Great Traditions

The Education Frontier: The application of the foregoing me the conscious design and construction of a better education (Rugg, 1947).

#### **4. Conclusions**

At the end of the 20th century, in the world, it was considered that the economic successes of the states are directly determined by the quality of their education systems, and the human capital is the most efficient factor of production.

Although no precise definition has been established so far, it has been accepted that the New Economy refers to permanently improved products, marketed by innovative agents that exploit the opportunities open or even created by themselves in the markets in the process of globalization. The policies of the New Economy are based on incentives offered to the creation and transmission of knowledge, on a creative management of intellectual property.

The specialists consider that, in the economy of the 21st century, the education system will become a priority branch of production, being considered as a sphere of advantageous investments. The impact of globalization on vocational education and training is manifested by expanding transnational education, transnational universities, "virtual" universities, changing student-teacher relationships, spreading distance learning and lifelong learning, through the need to adapt the curriculum in view of internationalization of academic content and processes.

The new approaches in education are currently embodied in paradigms such as: e-learning, tele-education, distance-learning or online-learning. These new learning modalities will become tools for training users' personality and creativity, thus being able to make all human activities present in the knowledge-based society more efficient.

Therefore, it can be concluded that learning becomes the general process characteristic of the new economy, because saving resources, orienting activities to meet the growing and diverse needs with limited resources implies knowledge, generalization, learning for all members present in the information society.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Cahn, M. S. (1970), *The philosophical foundations of education*, Harper&Row, New York.
- [2] Johnson, J. A.; Dupius, V. L.; MusialHall, G. E.; Gollnick, D. M. (1996), *Introduction to the foundations of American education*, Simon&Schuster Company, Boston, Massachusetts.
- [3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredrick\\_The\\_Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fredrick_The_Great)
- [4] Tanner, D.; Tanner, L. (1990), *History of the school curriculum*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York.
- [5] Campbell, R.; Cunningham, L. L.; Nystrand, R.; Usdan, M. D. (1999), *The organization and control of American schools*, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio.
- [6] Mc Lendon, J. C. (1966), *Social foundations of education*, MacMillan Company, New York.
- [7] Pai, Y. (1990), *Cultural foundation of education*, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York.
- [8] Hutchins, R. M. (1968), *The Learning society*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York
- [9] Hess, F. M.; Finn, C. E. jr. (2004), *Leaving no child behind? Options for kids in failing schools*, Palgrave, MacMillan, New York.
- [10] Rugg, H. (1947), *Foundation for American education*, World Book Company, Yonkers, New York.
- [11] Swaim, E. E. (1974), B. F. Skinner and Carl R. Rogers on behavior and education. Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Salem, Oregon
- [12] Chomsky, N. (2000), *Miseducation*, Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, Maryland.