

Philosophical Foundations of Education

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Unit - 1 : Philosophical Foundations of Education

1.1 Concept and Nature of Education

A. Concept of Education

1. Meaning

Education is a lifelong process of development which aims at the all-round development of an individual. It helps the learner to adjust in society and to lead a better and fulfilling life. It develops the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual powers of a person.

2. Definition

Education is the process of bringing about desirable changes in the behaviour of an individual through learning experiences.

It is a continuous process and prepares a person to face the challenges of life.

3. Etymological Meaning

The word "Education" is derived from the Latin word 'Educere' which means "to draw out" or 'to lead out'.

→ "Educere" = 'E' (out) + 'Ducere' (to lead)

Thus, education means drawing out the best within the individual.

4. Definitions by Prominent Thinkers

i) John Dewey :

Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

ii) Rabindranath Tagore :

Education means enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us.

iii) Mahatma Gandhi :

By education, I mean an all-round drawing of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit.

iv) Swami Vivekananda :

Education is the manifestation of the

B. Aims of Education

1. Individual Aims

- To promote the all-round development of the individual.
- To develop physical health and fitness.
- To develop mental abilities and emotional stability.
- To develop moral and spiritual values.
- To develop creativity and aesthetic sense.
- To develop self-reliance and self-confidence.
- To enable the individual to earn a livelihood.
- To prepare the individual for a meaningful and successful life.

2. Social Aims

- To make the individual a good and useful member of the society.
- To develop a sense of social responsibility and service.
- To promote social harmony and cooperation.
- To preserve and transmit the rich cultural heritage of the society.
- To remove social evils like casteism, communalism, untouchability, etc.
- To promote national unity and integrity.
- To prepare individuals for the welfare of the society.

3. Democratic Aims

- To develop democratic attitudes and values in individuals.
- To develop respect for the dignity and worth of every individual.
- To develop the spirit of equality, liberty and fraternity.
- To develop a sense of justice, fairness and discipline.
- To develop participation in democratic processes and decision making.
- To promote peaceful co-existence and tolerance.
- To prepare individuals to contribute to the development of a democratic society.

Thus, the aims of education are comprehensive and help in the overall development of the individual as well as the society and nation.

★ The ultimate aim of education is to develop a complete human being with strong character, a sound mind and a compassionate heart who can contribute meaningfully to the society.

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1.1 Concept and Nature of Education (Contd.)

C. Scope of Education

Education has a wide scope. It is not limited to schools or colleges only. It extends to the whole life of an individual and to every aspect of his development.

i) Lifelong Process

- Education is a lifelong process.
- It begins at birth and continues throughout life.
- Every experience of life provides opportunities for learning.
- It is a continuous, gradual and unending process.

★ Education is not preparation for life ;
education is life itself.

ii.) Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education

1. Formal Education :

- It is organized and systematic.
- It is provided in schools, colleges and universities.
- It follows a fixed curriculum and rules.

2. Informal Education :

- It is unorganized and unsystematic.
- It is gained through daily experiences of life.
- Family, home, play, work, media, etc. are its sources.

3. Non-formal Education :

- It is a combination of formal and informal education.
- It is organized but more flexible.
- It includes adult education, vocational training, community education, etc.

★ All these three forms of education are

iii) Human Development

- Education aims at the all-round development of an individual.
- It develops physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and moral aspects.
- It helps in the harmonious development of personality.
- It enables the individual to adjust with himself and environment.

iv) Branches / Areas of Education

- Education has different branches and areas such as :
 - General Education
 - Physical Education
 - Moral Education
 - Social Education
 - Vocational Education
 - Aesthetic Education
 - Special Education, etc.

v) Preparation for Life

- Education prepares the individual for the challenges of life.
- It develops qualities like self-reliance, independence, responsibility and leadership.
- It helps the individual to earn a living and adjust in society.
- It trains the individual to face problems with courage and confidence.

★ The main purpose of education is to prepare the individual to live a happy, successful and useful life.

vi) Continuous Reconstruction of Experience

- Education is not the accumulation of facts but the reconstruction of experience.
- It gives new meanings to old experiences and new experiences to old meanings.
- Through education, the individual learns to solve problems of life effectively.
- It makes the individual more adaptable and progressive.

★ Education helps in the continuous reconstruction of experience for better living.

vii) Guidance and Counselling

- Education provides guidance to the individual in physical, mental, social and moral aspects.
- It helps in discovering talents and interests.
- It helps in solving personal, educational and vocational problems.
- It promotes proper adjustment and mental well-being.

viii) Research in Education

- Research is an important part of education.
- It helps in finding out new methods, techniques and materials.
- It improves the quality of teaching-learning process.
- It helps in solving educational problems scientifically.

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1.1 Concept and Nature of Education (Contd.)

D. Conceptual Distinction between Related Terms

The terms related to education are often used interchangeably but they have different meanings. The conceptual distinction between these terms is given below :

i) Education and Schooling

- Education is a lifelong process. It begins at birth and continues throughout life.
- It includes all experiences that contribute to the development of an individual.
- Schooling is a part of education. It takes place in a school.
- It is time-bound and limited to a fixed period of formal education.

★ Schooling is a formal agency of education but education is much broader in scope.

ii) Education and Learning

- Education is a broader term which includes teaching, training, learning, experiences, values, attitudes and habits.
- Learning is a part of education. It refers to the process of gaining knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes.
- Education develops the whole personality whereas learning focuses mainly on acquiring knowledge and understanding.
- Education is concerned with 'what to learn' and 'why to learn' whereas learning involves 'how to learn'.

★ All learning leads to education but all education does not necessarily result in learning.

iii) Education and Training

- Education aims at the all-round development of an individual - physical, mental, intellectual, moral and social.
- Training is a part of education which prepares an individual for a specific job or task.
- Education helps in developing the personality whereas training develops specific skills and efficiency.
- Education is broad and comprehensive whereas training is narrow and specific.

★ Training prepares for earning a living; education prepares for living a good life.

iv) Education and Teaching

- Education is the total process of development of an individual.
- Teaching is a part of education. It is the process of imparting knowledge to the learner.
- Education includes teaching along with other activities like learning, training, guidance, experiences, values, habits, etc.
- Teaching is teacher-centred activity while education is learner-centred.

★ Teaching is one of the means of education but education is much wider than teaching.

v) Education and Instruction

- Education is a broader concept which aims at the holistic development of the individual.
- Instruction is a planned and organized activity to achieve specific behavioural objectives.
- Education deals with overall growth and development whereas instruction is related to imparting specific knowledge or skills.
- Instruction is usually given in a classroom situation whereas education takes place in all situations and throughout life.

★ Instruction is limited in scope; education has no limits.

Summary

- ① Education is a lifelong and continuous process for the all-round development of an individual.
- ② Schooling, learning, training, teaching and instruction are the parts or means of education.
- ③ These terms are related but differ in their scope, nature and purpose.

★ Understanding the distinction between these terms helps in clarifying the concept and nature of education.

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1.2 Agencies of Education

Education is not confined to school or teachers alone. It is a shared responsibility of various agencies in the society. These agencies influence the all-round development of an individual.

A. School as an Agency

- School is the formal agency of education.
- It provides organized and systematic instruction.
- It helps in developing knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and habits.
- It provides opportunities for co-curricular activities and personality development.
- It prepares the individual for future life and responsible citizenship.

★ School plays a vital role in the intellectual, social, moral and physical development of

B. Family as an Agency

- Family is the first and most important agency of education.
- It provides love, care, security and emotional support.
- It helps in the development of basic habits, manners, values and attitudes.
- Parents act as the first teachers of the child.
- Family environment influences the child's personality and behaviour.
- It provides socialization and prepares the child to adjust in society.

★ Family is the foundation of education and it shapes the character and future of the child.

C. Community as an Agency

- Community refers to the group of people living in the same area.
- It includes neighbours, social and cultural organizations, clubs, religious institutions, etc.
- Community helps in developing social values, cooperation and a sense of belongingness.
- It provides opportunities for participation in cultural, social and recreational activities.
- It helps in developing desirable attitudes and responsible behaviour.
- It contributes to the all-round development of an individual.

★ Community life provides rich experiences which help in the social and moral development of an individual.

D. Media as an Agency

- Media includes newspapers, magazines, radio, television, films, internet, social media, etc.
- It is a powerful agency of modern education.
- It provides information, knowledge and awareness about the world.
- It influences opinions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.
- It can educate, entertain and motivate people.
- It helps in spreading new ideas, culture, values and social awareness.
- Both positive and negative effects of media influence the learner.

★ Media has a great impact on the mind of the individual; its wise use leads to development and growth.

Key Points :

- ① Education is a shared responsibility of various agencies.
- ② School provides formal and systematic education.
- ③ Family provides love, care, security and basic values.
- ④ Community develops social values and a sense of belongingness.
- ⑤ Media spreads knowledge and influences attitudes and behaviour.

★ All these agencies work together to ensure the holistic development of the individual and prepare him for a meaningful life.

Summary

- Education is a lifelong process that takes place through different agencies.
- School imparts formal education and develops various abilities.
- Family is the first teacher and provides basic values and security.
- Community helps in social development and participation.
- Media provides information and influences thoughts and behaviour.

★ The combined influence of school, family, community and media ensures the all-round development of an individual.

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1.3 Schools of Philosophy

Philosophy provides the basic ideas and principles which guide education. Different schools of philosophy have their own views about the purpose and methods of education.

The major schools of philosophy related to education are :

- ① Idealism
- ② Naturalism
- ③ Pragmatism
- ④ Existentialism
- ⑤ Humanism
- ⑥ Constructivism

★ These schools of philosophy influence the aims, content, methods and evaluation of education in different ways.

① Idealism

- Idealism believes that reality is basically mental or spiritual.
- It emphasizes the development of a rational, moral and spiritual individual.
- Education should develop the inner potentialities and help in the realization of ultimate truth and ideals.
- Knowledge is eternal and unchanging.
- The teacher is a guide who helps the learner to attain truth.
- Curriculum includes humanities, literature, philosophy, history, etc.

★ Idealism aims at the development of mind, character and spirit to achieve perfection.

② Naturalism

- Naturalism is based on the laws of nature.
- It believes that education should be in harmony with nature.
- The child is naturally good and has inherent potentialities.
- Education should provide freedom for natural growth and development.
- Emphasis is on physical education, outdoor activities and learning through nature.
- The teacher is a director who creates natural environment.

★ Naturalism aims at the all-round development of the child in a natural environment.

③ Pragmatism

- Pragmatism believes that truth is what works in practice.
- It emphasizes learning by doing.
- Education is a process of problem solving through experience.
- The aim of education is to prepare the individual for life.
- Curriculum is activity-centred and related to real life situations.
- The teacher is a facilitator and guide.
- It promotes democracy and social efficiency.

★ Pragmatism aims at the development of intelligence, skills and attitudes useful in daily life.

④ Existentialism

- Existentialism focuses on the existence of the individual in this world.
- It believes that existence precedes essence.
- Education should help the individual to make choices and take responsibility for his actions.
- It emphasizes freedom, self-direction and personal growth.
- The teacher is a counsellor and helps in self-discovery.
- Curriculum is flexible and learner-centred.

★ Existentialism aims at the development of a responsible, free and self-reliant individual.

⑤ Humanism

- Humanism believes in the dignity and worth of the individual.
- It emphasizes the holistic development of body, mind and spirit.
- Education should promote self-actualization and personal growth.
- The teacher is a friend, guide and facilitator.
- Curriculum includes subjects which develop creativity, values and positive attitudes.

★ Humanism aims at the development of a well-adjusted, creative and worthy individual.

⑤ Constructivism

- Constructivism believes that knowledge is constructed by the learner.
- Learning is an active process of building new ideas on the basis of experience.
- Education should encourage inquiry, exploration and critical thinking.
- The teacher is a facilitator who provides learning experiences.
- Curriculum is learner-centred and problem-based.

★ Constructivism aims at the development of independent thinking and lifelong learning.

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1.4 Classical Indian Philosophies

India has a rich philosophical heritage. The classical Indian philosophies provide deep insights into the nature of reality, knowledge, ethics and liberation. The important classical Indian philosophies are :

- ① Vedanta Darshan
- ② Sankhya Darshan
- ③ Buddhism
- ④ Jainism

Let us discuss them briefly.

★ Indian philosophies aim at 'self-realization', liberation and leading a righteous and meaningful life.

① Vedanta Darshan

- Vedanta is also called 'Uttara Mimamsa' or 'End of the Vedas'.
- It is based on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutras.
- Vedanta believes that Brahman is the ultimate reality. It is infinite, eternal and all-pervading.
- The soul (Atman) is a part of Brahman.
- The goal of life is 'Moksha' (liberation) from the cycle of birth and death.
- Knowledge is the means of liberation. Ignorance (Avidya) causes bondage.
- Ethical living, self-control and devotion help in attaining Moksha.

★ Vedanta teaches the unity of Atman and Brahman and the importance of knowledge for liberation.

② Sankhya Darshan

- Sankhya is one of the oldest systems of Indian philosophy.
- It was founded by Sage Kapila.
- It is dualistic in nature.
- According to Sankhya, the universe consists of two eternal realities - Purusha (conscious spirit) and Prakriti (matter).
- Purusha is passive, eternal and many in number.
- Prakriti is active and evolves into the material world.
- The goal of life is 'Kaivalya' (liberation) which is the isolation of Purusha from Prakriti.
- Discriminative knowledge (viveka) leads to liberation.

★ Sankhya emphasizes on knowledge and discrimination between Purusha and Prakriti.

③ Buddhism

- Buddhism was founded by Lord Buddha in the 6th century B.C.
- It is based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.
- According to Buddhism, life is full of suffering (dukkha).
- The cause of suffering is desire and attachment.
- The goal of life is Nirvana which is the cessation of suffering.
- Buddhism rejects the concept of eternal soul (Anatma).
- It emphasizes on compassion, non-violence, right conduct and meditation.

★ Buddhism teaches the middle path for leading a peaceful and harmonious life.

④ Jainism

- Jainism was founded by Lord Mahavira in the 6th century B.C.
- It believes in the existence of soul (Jiva) and non-soul (Ajiva).
- There are infinite souls in the universe.
- The soul is bound by Karma (actions) and attains liberation through right conduct.
- The goal of life is 'Moksha' which is freedom from the cycle of birth and death.
- Jainism emphasizes on the principles of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy) and Aparigraha (non-possession).
- It promotes self-discipline, self-control and purity of thought, word and deed.

★ Jainism strongly emphasizes on non-violence and self-purification for liberation.

Summary

- ① Vedanta believes in the unity of Atman and Brahman and the goal of Moksha.
- ② Sankhya is dualistic and aims at Kaivalya through discriminative knowledge.
- ③ Buddhism teaches the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path to attain Nirvana.
- ④ Jainism emphasizes on Ahimsa and the five vows to attain liberation.

★ These philosophies provide deep understanding of life, reality and the path to lead a righteous and meaningful life.

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1.5 Contribution of Indian Philosophers

Indian philosophers have made immense contributions to education. Their ideas emphasize the all-round development of individual and the development of a just and humane society.

The major Indian philosophers and their contribution to education are :

- ① Sri Aurobindo
- ② Mahatma Gandhi
- ③ Rabindranath Tagore
- ④ J. Krishnamurti
- ⑤ Sonam Wangchuk

★ These philosophers have given practical solutions to educational problems based on Indian culture and values.

① Sri Aurobindo

- Sri Aurobindo believed that education is the means of manifesting the perfection already in man.
- The aim of education is the all-round development - physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual.
- He laid stress on spiritual education.
- Education should help the individual to realize his divine nature.
- He emphasized on freedom of the spirit and development of creativity.
- The teacher is a guide who helps in the inner growth of the child.

★ According to Sri Aurobindo, education should lead to self-realization and union with the divine.

② Mahatma Gandhi

- Mahatma Gandhi believed in 'Nai Talim' or Basic Education.
- The aim of education is to develop body, mind and spirit through productive work.
- Education should be free, universal and compulsory.
- He emphasized on self-reliance, character formation and social service.
- Education should be in mother tongue and related to life.
- He believed in the development of moral values like truth, non-violence, love and co-operation.

★ Gandhiji considered education as a means for building a better society based on truth and non-violence.

③ Rabindranath Tagore

- Rabindranath Tagore believed that education should help in the harmony of man with nature.
- The aim of education is to develop freedom, creativity and love for nature.
- He laid stress on aesthetic education - music, art, literature and culture.
- Education should be a joyful activity and not a burden.
- He established 'Shantiniketan' where education is given in natural environment.
- He emphasized on internationalism and universal brotherhood.

★ According to Tagore, education should develop a complete human being with freedom and creativity.

④ J. Krishnamurti

- J. Krishnamurti believed that education should help the individual to understand himself and the world.
- The aim of education is self-knowledge, freedom from fear and conflict.
- He laid stress on the development of intelligence, sensitivity and compassion.
- Education should not create competition but cooperation.
- He opposed authority, discipline based on fear and religious dogma.
- The teacher is a mediator and an observer who learns along with the learner.

★ Krishnamurti's education aims at the holistic development of the individual and creation of a new society.

⑤ Sonam Wangchuk

- Sonam Wangchuk is an education reformer from Ladakh.
- He believes that education should be innovative, practical and related to the needs of local community.
- He started 'Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)'.
- He emphasizes on experiential learning, creativity, innovation and environmental conservation.
- He believes that education should develop confidence, problem solving ability and responsibility towards society.

★ Sonam Wangchuk's ideas promote practical learning and sustainable development through education.