

JOHN DEWEY EXPERIENCE & EDUCATION

The great educational theorist's most concise statement of his ideas about the needs, the problems, and the possibilities of education—written after his experience with the progressive schools and in the light of the criticisms his theories received.

Experience and Education

John Dewey

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Experience and Education is the best concise statement on education ever published by John Dewey, the man acknowledged to be the pre-eminent educational theorist of the twentieth century. Written more than two decades after *Democracy and Education* (Dewey's most comprehensive statement of his position in educational philosophy), this book demonstrates how Dewey reformulated his ideas as a result of his intervening experience with the progressive schools and in the light of the criticisms his theories had received.

Analyzing both "traditional" and "progressive" education, Dr. Dewey here insists that neither the old nor the new education is adequate and that each is miseducative because neither of them applies the principles of a carefully developed philosophy of experience. Many pages of this volume illustrate Dr. Dewey's ideas for a philosophy of experience and its relation to education. He particularly urges that all teachers and educators looking for a new movement in education should think in terms of the deeper and larger issues of education rather than in terms of some divisive "ism" about education, even such an "ism" as "progressivism." His philosophy, here expressed in its most essential, most readable form, predicates an American educational system that respects all sources of experience, one that offers a true learning situation that is both historical and social, both orderly and dynamic.

Experience and Education Details

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From Reader Review Experience and Education for online ebook

Rob says

(7/10) Dewey is kind of the grandfather of the radical education movement, and being someone who never met a freeschool he didn't like I thought it would be worth checking him out. As it happens, this book seems like almost a conscious attempt to move away from that radicalism and towards a kind of centrism, attacking both traditional education and radical pedagogy. There's some interesting stuff in here about experience as the centre of education, and I think that's a really valuable idea, although I'm not sure it follows that those who are more experienced should necessarily have pedagogical authority. But too much of it is a kind of aggravating Goldilocks politics. Probably worth reading for its historical value, but don't expect a radical screed in support of democratic education.

Thomas says

Experience and Education is an essay on the philosophy of education. Given first at a series of lectures in 1938, it is part of an ongoing dialog about how we should proceed with our educational system. Then, as now, people were dismayed about the state of their schools. In this work, Dewey does not provide a concrete answer, but instead situates the debate in a larger philosophical context. This book is a good jumping off point for further discussion-- by itself, it makes so startling insights.

Leanna Aker says

This book is a great, short one to get you thinking about your own philosophy of education. While Dewey is a Progressivist, he advocates a middle ground between the "new" education and the "old." The best summary I can give is that Dewey's philosophy is one of common sense that places importance upon the needs of the child, but doesn't eschew the wisdom of the teacher, either.

The style is a bit philosophical, heady, so at times I found myself re-reading paragraphs to make sure I had gotten the gist.

Kealoha says

Considered to be one of the classic must read books for any educator, it discusses traditional and progressive education in a very non-confrontational and honest way. If you ever read any writings for Dewey, make this one your first read. It's a bit tough to read at times, and I found myself re-reading sections of the material to get a better understanding as sometimes I lost my way or just didn't get it. Worth the read and worth the time spent to understand where Dewey is coming from.

Timothy Darling says

This book, originally written in 1938 has some important things to say. That children are not built to sit for hours and listen to lectures, but rather to be in motion. That experience is a more effective teacher than rote learning. That ignoring the voice of the student in education is to disconnect from the process by which she will learn. I think Dewey is right on many fronts, including the idea that a thoroughly planned and skillfully executed experimentally based education is more effective than a traditional face-front classroom model.

That said, I must observe a few things. First, if 75 years of promoting this view have brought us to standardized testing (measuring the consequences of experience) and teachers that are pressed to account for every moment of every lesson we are somewhere missing a crucial point. In the modern classroom we shout for smaller class sizes, why? Because a teacher must give greater attention to individuals than he can do in the present circumstances. This is an unintended consequence of Dewey's method. Experience is a better teacher. Unfortunately, that means each student's previous experience and capacity for new experience must be taken into account more individually than Dewey seems to realize. The mechanism for teaching is much more tailor made and the general nature and capacity of public education is ignored. Certainly traditional methods may be less effective, but they do work on some level.

Also, Dewey decries a traditional classroom that places primary value on the past (cultural heritage) and says instead we must move the children into the future. This is hypothetically true, but ignores the fact that society and many of the people among whom the child will interact are products and expressions of that culture. Certainly we want everyone to be able to think creatively in unexpected situations, but Dewey does not adequately demonstrate that traditional learning lacks in this regard. After all, he must be a product of such an education and he seems quite able to formulate new ideas.

In fact the traditional classroom is not dead. This is a consequence of necessity. It is necessary for teachers to model what they themselves have learned and will resort to these paradigms when newer paradigms seem faulty. It is necessary because of the massive classroom sizes and the sheer volume of information that must be assimilated in the modern education. It is necessary because not everything can be experienced but some things must be learned in the abstract. At best Dewey preaches a method that needs to be given more and more thorough exploration but cannot be bought wholesale without risking the disintegration of the educational machine. There is no way our superstructure can handle the expense of an endeavor that would tax personal resources on such an atomic scale.

Cheryllann says

I'm not fond of theoretical reading - call it a side-effect of working on a doctorate while working full-time and cramming 500 - 1000 pages of reading into a two day period. So it was no surprise that I wasn't excited to pick up Dewey, but I needed to do because I have a proposal to write. I know Dewey. At least I think I know Dewey. As a traditionally-trained teacher, I first learned about Dewey 20+ years ago as an undergraduate. I know how others (professors and researchers) have interpreted Dewey, but I have not read anything of Dewey's until now. I found that this rather concise paperback first published in 1938 still resonates with today's educational debates. Dewey's lays out his argument clearly and made it easy for me to pull his ideas into my theoretical framework, which is a good thing. As I read, took notes, and talked back to the text, the compelling thought I had was that our policymakers need to read Dewey and spend some time in our classrooms, and then they may decide that we're veering off-track when it comes to education in this

country.

A.B. says

A short book to clarify his beliefs after time and criticism had its word. I felt much was said counts even now for the problems we are facing in education. My favorite part was in the last few pages where he spoke that what we are striving for is something worthy of being called education, and not education with a prefix such as "traditional" or "progressive." I recommend this to all those interested in education from teachers to parents. It is a hard read though I feel I should warn you.

Mandy says

At less than a hundred pages, this is more of a pamphlet than a book. Apparently, many people find it difficult to read and assimilate, but I didn't have that issue. I will grant that it was written in the 1930s, so that could be an issue for some as far as the style of writing. I didn't find it overly difficult, but I did find it intriguing. Dewey has a lot to say about progressive school reform (he was known for it), and this is one of the things he wrote that was published toward the end of his career pursuing such things. It does make one think about the way schools are structured and what would be the best ways to educate people effectively. If you're interested in contemplating such things, then this would be a good book for you to pick up. If you're not, then you won't like this book at all.

Carrie Shaurette says

What most surprised me was how a book written in 1938 could have so much relevance to education today. I was assigned to read a couple of chapters for professional development and found myself getting sucked in to the whole book. Speaking in broad strokes about two opposite education styles, Dewey falls closer in line with progressive education, though warns against unbridled freedom in the classroom. With dense and challenging text, don't confuse it with beach reading, but anyone working in the field of education should be familiar with this classic work.

Ilmari Vauras says

This book was no doubt revolutionary and insightful when published in 1938. However, as a middle school teacher in Finland in 2016, I didn't feel the classic had much to give, as so many of John Dewey's ideas have already been in use for a long time. Of course I have to appreciate his work, which has had influence in educational theory and practice.

David Schaafsma says

The most concise statement of Dewey's philosophy of education, and an analysis of traditional vs.

progressive education with respect to experience. For a longer treatment, more complete treatment, read Democracy and Education.

“There is no such thing as educational value in the abstract. The notion that some subjects and methods and that acquaintance with certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves is the reason why traditional education reduced the material of education so largely to a diet of predigested materials.” ?
John Dewey, Experience and Education

“The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.”

? John Dewey, Experience and Education (yay to all of you reading this that read regularly and post on Goodreads and keep on reading and learning!)

“‘Preparation’ is a treacherous idea. In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that the mere acquisition of a certain amount of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., which is taught and studied because it may be useful at some time in the future, has this effect, and it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired.”

? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“There is no such thing as educational value in the abstract. The notion that some subjects and methods and that acquaintance with certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves is the reason why traditional education reduced the material of education so largely to a diet of predigested materials.” ?
John Dewey, Experience and Education

“The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.”

? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future.”

? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“Preparation” is a treacherous idea. In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that the mere acquisition of a certain amount of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., which is taught and studied because it may be useful at some time in the future, has this effect, and it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired.”

? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. If impetus in this direction is weakened instead of being intensified, something much more than mere lack of preparation takes place. The pupil is actually robbed of native capacities which otherwise would enable him [sic] to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life. We often see persons who have had little schooling and in whose case the absence of set schooling proves to be a

positive asset. They have at least retained their native common sense and power of judgement, and its exercise in the actual conditions of living has given them the precious gift of ability to learn from the experiences they have.” ? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned.” ? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“It is [the teacher's] business to be on the alert to see what attitudes and habitual tendencies are being created. In this direction he[sic] must, if he is an educator, be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth and what are detrimental. He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning.” ? John Dewey, Experience and Education

“There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his [sic] activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying.” ? John Dewey, Experience and Education

Mike Jensen says

The speeches printed here (published in 1938) were given at a controversial time in education theory, as traditional education was in tension with experimental progressive approaches. Dewey, a champion of progressive education, tries to find a synthesis for the best education possible, which he says begins with and must always include experience. Education experience is explored in myriad ways, and education for knowledge that may be useful in adulthood is examined. Dewey concludes that science and the scientific method are central to all formal education. There is much in the background to this book that is not explained, so I do not feel I understand all the issues since I come in to a late stage of the conversation. There is no star rating above because there is too much about the background of this book that I do not understand to rate it fairly.

Aisha says

Philosophical books sometimes send my brain in a tailspin of redundancy and over analysis. I enjoyed that Dewey discusses the added value of capitalizing on student's personal/life experiences as a foundation for their own educational journeys. I wish that the book would have added more insight towards incorporating a democratic classroom approach to unearthing these lessons but then, it may be my educator desire emphasizing practical over theoretical.

max says

Many of the world's greatest authors have weighed in on the subject of how children should be taught. The Greeks' main educational theorist was none other than Plato, who wrote with great clarity and precision

(although some of his ideas, like getting rid of the poets, were preposterous). The Romans had Quintilian, whose massive treatise, "The Orator's Education," is elegantly written and chock full of sensible educational principles. Two thousand years later in the United States of America, we have John Dewey, whose clumsy, opaque writing is so bad that it actually hurts to read it. He simply lacks the requisite skills as a writer to make his subject comprehensible.

Even conceding that Dewey's ideas were distorted and corrupted by those who misunderstood his message, he nevertheless endures to this day as the high priest of progressive education. This book will give you a pretty good idea of its central tenets. In Dewey's view, traditional education consisted of:

imposition from above;
external discipline;
acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill;
preparation for a more or less remote future;
static aims and materials (pp. 19-20).

Note his obvious dislike of such distasteful things as "discipline," "skills," and "drill." As for "static aims and materials," Dewey doesn't bother to elaborate on what exactly that means, but we can be sure that it is an evil that must be rooted out and banished from his brave new schoolroom.

Dewey wrote a lot, and I am familiar only with this work. Here, he comes across less as a philosopher than a polemicist, perhaps even a propagandist. He constantly sets up, then knocks down the (false) straw man of traditional education. This, we are reminded, is the rigid, authoritarian schoolmaster who insists upon the memorization of facts with no regard for their context, who expects children to begin to master the details of such alien subjects as mathematics, history, and the English language. The desks are lined up, the rote lesson begins, the switch is ready to come down on the backside of the errant pupil.

Enter John Dewey, romantic theorist, disciple of Rousseau and savior of American education. In Dewey's view, schools were all wrong: they were prisons where students were forced to learn things that were impossible to learn because they were unconnected with their "experience." The people who ran these schools simply marched blindly in lockstep with a "received tradition" (read: traditional body of academic knowledge) which they neither understood nor felt any need to question. Because of teachers' inability to connect "isolated" subjects with the "experience" of their students, the results were foreordained: boredom, distraction, failure.

In educational circles, Dewey's ideas are worshipped with all of the dogmatic adherence of religious fundamentalists. I was required to read this book as part of an educational certification program I enrolled in. (I have reread it since.) Not surprisingly, no book having anything to do with the virtues of traditional education was on the list, because according to Dewey and his ardent disciples, traditional education simply has no virtues. And if, within the schools of education, you dare to question the premises of Dewey's educational philosophy, you are an instant pariah. This is perhaps the most dismaying feature of the education schools today: in the very place where robust, critical debate should be occurring about the aims and methods of education, debate is not welcomed at all. You either accept the correctness of Dewey's views, or you are wrong. In this respect the ed schools are more like Soviet gulags or communist re-education camps than anything resembling a university.

One wonders what kind of teachers Dewey had as a youngster. They must have been mediocre, uninspired drudges who lacked any imagination, creativity, or sympathetic understanding of their young charges. How else could he set out to attack "traditional" education as vehemently as he did? For centuries it was called

simply "education," and only came to be vilified as "traditional" when the progressive educators sought to dismantle it.

I would suggest a very different view of traditional education. In place of the dull pedant repeatedly conjured up by Dewey, imagine a teacher who has acquired an education without ever having stepped inside an Education School. Imagine someone who has read and studied seriously, knows and understands a subject with great depth, and has graduated with honors. Imagine, too, that this educator possesses the ability -- along with patience, intelligence, and warmth -- to draw students into a love of science or mathematics or language or history by virtue of superior training, communication skills, and knowledge of how children think and develop. Imagine as well a teacher who insists on students' acquisition of essential skills such as mathematical proficiency and a knowledge of proper English grammar -- regardless of whether these are perceived by the student to be connected with his "experience." Alas, this is the traditional teacher whose existence Dewey does not acknowledge, because if he did his arguments would crumble like a sand castle.

Kelly says

This concise, incredibly dense volume on Dewey's philosophy of education is as relevant today as it was when it was published in 1938. Dewey argues that students need rich experiences to learn, and encourages a cooperative learning environment that teaches students not only content, but also the skills to function as citizens in a democratic society. Remarkably, Dewey's theory of experiential education, which he developed through observation, has been since proven to be completely aligned with the way that the brain actually learns (see *The Art of Changing the Brain*, an excellent book on the biology of learning). This is a must-read for all teachers.

Kony says

Smart and sensible. Maybe even timeless (we'll see in a century or so).

Good reminder for learners and teachers that their respective roles are, ideally, complementary and overlapping; that public education is essentially a social process serving social purposes; and that new knowledge is useful only if it speaks meaningfully to past experience and lays groundwork for a richer series of future experiences.

Pithiness is both this book's strength and its weakness -- strength because it imparts its claims swiftly and effectively; weakness because it's over before you can stop to scratch your head.

Shafiq Razak Rajan says

I haven't yet finished John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* -- which this current book serves as a sort of sequel to -- nor have I yet familiarize with the author's philosophical stance and ideological positions. But, having been trained as a teacher in a foreign (and Western) country, the ideas I encountered in *Experience and Education* have a recognizable whiff.

It turns out that many of the reforms made in the field of education (in the West, at least) originated from Dewey's ideas. The shift from teacher-centred instruction to student-based learning, the increasing emphasis on subject materials with practical, real-world applications (Good-bye Latin and Greek), the absence of arbitrary rules and corporal punishment, students being freer in their speech, movements and, more importantly, in their thoughts. Thus, redundant barriers erected between teachers and students, between knowledge and application, are destroyed. Democracy is manifested in the classroom.

Even during Dewey's lifetime (1859 – 1952), his ideas gained a lot of followers, leading to the creation of numerous 'progressive' schools throughout the United States. Those schools sought to provide a counterbalance to the stultifying effect of 'traditional' education and to reform education as a whole. Everything that reeks of 'traditionalism' was discarded away, or literally countermanded word by word. For instance, if in traditional schools, the teacher rules the class like a dictator, then in progressive schools, the teacher-dictator is overthrown and be done for. However, as Dewey himself notes, the reformers' zeal in going against everything the traditional education stands for is not sufficient for meaningful change – it might even be detrimental for progressive education. Let us return to the teacher-dictator example: what happens when we get rid of her? Are we going to have an anarchic classroom with no clear authority between the teacher and her students? Are students free to roam about, to shout, and to bully as there is absence in authority? What form of authority is useful? Is discipline still relevant in progressive education? And many other questions that needed answering before real progress can be made in progressive education itself. Nonetheless, the progressive schools that proliferated during Dewey's lifetime failed to adequately address those questions, be it on the theoretical and the practical level, turning those progressive methods into exercises in regression.

Therefore, says Dewey, a sound philosophy for a progressive education must be adequately detailed before it can be safely put into practice. This is the aim of *Experience and Education*. In this book, Dewey seeks to clarify his ideas, like on what he really meant by educative experience and miseducative experience, what form of authority is needed in classroom, what form of freedom is suitable for the students, and, most importantly, the aim of education itself.

Fundamental to Dewey's idea is that experience forms the bulk of learning. We learn by experience. Listening to our teacher's mumblings about long dead historical figures is an experience, memorizing the names of the same dead figures for our examination is also an experience, and actually avoiding the same mistakes made by them when we ourselves are in their position is also an experience. All three are experiences that taught us something about those historical figures. But, each experience has a varying degree of educative quality about them. Certainly one can learn history better when it is tied with real-life application, (like being a statesman, something that won't happen to the majority of us, but unfortunately befall upon those with the emotional literacy of an infant), and learning history for the sake of examination or through the words of a dispassionate teacher aren't really educative. Therefore, Dewey stresses the importance of educative experience in the classroom. The clearer the subject's relation to the real-world situations, and to the student's personal experience, the more educative is the learning experience.

Experience can also be miseducative. Having to face a borderline psychotic teacher for our Add Maths classes might not make a great mathematician out of us. Being forced to follow arbitrary rules, or else suffer needless corporal punishments, will make us hate school even more. Memorizing the names of dead foreign men from long ago may not be a priority if you have to remember the names of your extended relatives. These learning experiences are miseducative in a way because they do not promote learning. Only through positive learning experiences that have tangible connections to the real-world will educative experiences be enabled.

Despite traditional education's abuse of authority, there is still a deep need for a form of authority in the classroom. Without discipline, no real learning can take place. Dewey likens the teacher to a referee in a game. In sports, children usually have agreed to set of rules that govern the games. Otherwise, there can't be no clear winners or losers, abuses of authority can be rampant and sports will not be fun anymore. If there is any outcry of injustice, it is usually due to referee's failure to enforce the rules, and not against the rules of the game themselves. Similarly, rules in schools should be regarded in the same manner. Rules should be there to promote conducive learning for everyone, and not be some arbitrary decisions that makes no sense, or be there for the sake of propping some authoritarian egos. Students should be made to understand those rules, as they have understood the rules for games. Only then discipline is likelier to come from within the students themselves, with decreasing need of external enforcement by teachers.

Freedom is also given prominence in progressive education. But the freedom is not absolute, and certainly not for its own sake. Of course children learn better when they are moving around, and not sitting down without speaking a word (while their mind wanders around everywhere and nowhere). A degree of freedom for the body can make a lesson more engaging. Nonetheless, Dewey places freedom of thought as being higher in importance. The freedom to make decisions, to judge and to reflect on their own – through perceptive guidance by the teacher – can be an educative experience for them to become wise and mature learners. Having decisions presumptively made for them, or having them to simply regurgitate facts without reflection, are obviously tools to manufacture immature and uncritical learners, and later on, adults.

Education should also be purposeful. In this matter, Dewey never really states what exactly is the purpose of education. We can suspect, based on his activism and the titles of his books, he believes education should be for the creation of democratic citizens. In *Experience and Education*, he never clearly states that. But he does give us a definition of purpose: "...an end view [that] involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulses." Purpose is the direction we are going, measured with our own desires and impulses. And students, according to Dewey, should participate in constructing their own purpose in learning, and not be subjected to enslavement by an imposed purpose (fertile ground for indoctrination here), or, more unfortunately, having no purpose at all, which means being enslaved by their own desires. To form a purpose of an action, we must be able 1) to observe the surrounding conditions, 2) to evaluate past experiences (be it personal or others) with similar conditions and lastly, 3) to judge the relation between past experiences with present conditions to determine its significance for future actions. These three aforementioned steps are to be practiced in forming a purpose for an action. And forming our own meaningful purposes is progressive step towards creating democratic citizens.

Dewey's philosophy of education is certainly applicable in secular educational institutions. But, what about its application in religious educational institutions? Can it be applied where a fidelity to dogma, and a reverence for authority, form the core tenets of the curriculum? Can democratic education, with its emphasis on practical, worldly experience, coexist harmoniously in a religious institution?

That's a difficult question that I'm myself found it difficult to address, as I profess a lack of knowledge in these matters. This involves differing worldviews. Dewey's worldview calls for more faith in the common people, with less faith for external authorities, be it a Higher Being or lower beings who for some reason consider themselves higher than others. Then, there are those worldview calls for an adherence to a set of beliefs eternally fixed through time. These clashing worldviews – if indeed it is possible – needs the creative agency of sensitive reformists who can somehow reconcile them, thereby democratizing religious learning institutions without distorting the core tenets of that tradition. But I doubt this is possible without some form of sacrifice or compromise of one worldview over another.

Also, Dewey's philosophy of education, based on my personal and hence, limited reading of *Experience and*

Education, seems to place too much importance on positivistic thinking, with its preference for empirical methods, as the ultimate source of knowledge. While not denying the importance of science in uncovering new discoveries that benefits mankind, it is vulnerable in being subjected to control by forces with vested interests. Similarly, Dewey's philosophy of education can only be truly democratic if it does not put too much faith in positivistic thinking, and be able to reflect critically the underlying ideology that governs life. Nothing in life is politically neutral, especially education. This is where Paulo Friere's ideas can come into the picture, and perhaps supplement Dewey's educational philosophy.

Cello says

This short book is about the reasoning to a philosophy of experience to education. It is easy to read, but I feel like it could have delved deeper with more examples of actual education. I found myself thinking how even though this was copy-written in 1938 with the first edition being in 1963, we still have many of the same questions, opinions, and frustrations brought up about education. It has me thinking about how to extend the philosophy of experience to education.

Robert says

With theory, it's all about definitions. Even in less than a 100 pages, Dewey finds a way to muddle some of his together which damages the clarity of his theories. And there are two egregious typos on the summary on the back of the book... where was the editor!!??

That being said, this is an excellent argument for experiential education that is bold and unflinching, and a wonderful distillation of many of Dewey's ideas. And covering as much ground as he does in less than a 100 pages is also a reminder to us all that brevity is the soul of wit and wisdom. So I'll stop talking.

Jonathan Terrington says

It is highly curious that outside the arena of teaching the process of education itself remains very much misunderstood. In fact until you actually enter into the process of teaching - education seems very much like an act of guiding others with your bountiful knowledge. Of course very few realise that teaching is as much about learning as it is about passing knowledge. And that education also extends far beyond merely providing knowledge. It is however highly important that educators properly understand their work as they are dealing in and with a moral profession. They are working not with instruments of stone like builders but with flesh and blood people. John Dewey's work here is therefore a valuable insight into education from a theoretical viewpoint (which helps contribute to a practical stance on education). Although writing in a different era it appears that many of his points are still valid today as our education system (particularly in Australia) has not developed much past the traditional ideas.

Chapter 1

In chapter one Dewey raises the idea of progressive vs traditional education. He makes the solid points that traditional education is stagnant and static. It believes that what it teaches is the finished product. And from a

philosophical and personal view I believe that much education is still dealt with in this way. I note that today many theories are taught as fact, something I very much disagree with. I think of that type of teaching as more indoctrinating. If we properly were to accept that perhaps these theories are not the finished product (and many of them may be flawed) we would encourage greater individual thought. And I believe personally at this point that education should serve the purpose of encouraging the individual to be an individual and to think for themselves, having their own opinion on issues.

Chapter 2

In his second chapter Dewey explains the need for a theory of experience. While I am still trying to grasp the full idea I see some of what Dewey is explaining. He very much explains how experience contributes to learning and how a conditioning method of education does not do much to allow for learning of practical skills and abilities. Many teachers will be challenged by students asking questions like: when will we use the quadratic formula in 'real life'? And that is what Dewey is explaining. That students experience school and they often view some things they learn as unnecessary experiences or perhaps even negative experiences. The question should become one of relevance then rather than curriculum. The quadratic formula should be seen in the understanding of aiding logical thinking (much like how Christopher sees maths in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*) and the relevance of the experience of learning should be able to be understood. But too often it is not. As a (hopefully) future Literature/English/History teacher I hope to be able to show and educate the relevance of studying fictional novels and past events. That they do affect our modern experiences.

"Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in future experiences."

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 explores the criteria of experience. Dewey uses this chapter to look in detail at the idea of negative and positive experience. He refers to the idea of someone gaining experience as a burglar in particular and uses that to show what experience should be for in education. There is a lot of depth and detail in this chapter but ultimately Dewey's argument boils down to discussing why we do things the way we do. For instance we have democratic systems he argues because we see through experience that they are better for human life. He also looks at how experiences outside of a classroom contribute to experiences inside a classroom and that teachers need to be aware of the intersection of the social community and the classroom.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 examines society and education. In particular the idea of social control and education. Dewey points out that some level of social control is needed in education. He uses the metaphor of how a children's game must have rules in order to provide mediation and allow for smoother running and enjoyment. In the same way education needs a level of social control but not to the point where it impedes on the ability of students to have a relevant experience and to mature. The question then becomes where to draw the line so that education is not about homogenising students and creating an end product of citizens for some supposedly glorious democracy which is no democratic idea at all.

Chapter 5

Dewey then communicates what he believes the role of freedom is within the classroom. I found the ideas about freedom itself interesting from a philosophical point of view. The idea that was hinted at in particular

about that perhaps to be free we have to fulfil a purpose and role. This in particular tied into the next topic Dewey raised.

Chapter 6

Dewey looks at the meaning of purpose in Chapter 6. In many ways this chapter is designed to look at the questions students ask such as 'why do we need to learn this?' And in many other ways it is designed to look at the purpose of teachers, teaching and experience in regards to teaching. One idea I particularly noted was the idea of how purpose defines individuals. (Think about it we all identify ourselves more often by what we do than who we are - I'm a writer, reader and teacher for instance)

Chapter 7

This penultimate chapter observes the idea of subject-matter and education. Dewey looking at how experience and subjects like English, Math and History come together. This is a lengthy chapter and ties together much of Dewey's overall argument to show how his philosophy of experience is linked to education.

Chapter 8

In this final chapter Dewey summarises his argument, noting that education must move either backwards or forwards. He concludes that he has included the points that must be addressed for the later to occur in 'Experience and Education'. That being that educators must have a sound philosophy of experience so that education does not become pseudo-education.

Whether you agree with John Dewey's philosophy or not this is an important and informative text to analyse and read in regards to education. Because Teaching is linked to experience and the community in many ways and part of becoming a teacher is learning to adopt a professional outlook and manner. There is a lot of information in this relatively short text and I certainly have not retained it all. I do however think that personally there was a lot of useful pedagogical ideas in there and I do recommend it to anyone wanting to look at education and philosophy.
