

Legacies of horace mann and john dewey

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Horace Mann (1796-1859) and John Dewey (1859-1952) are important contributors in the development of American Educational system. Mann regarded education as an effective tool for training children and individuals into obedient workers while Dewey sees education as a means for growth and preparation of individuals to become democratic citizens (Filler 128; Westbrook 171).

In conformity to their educational philosophies, Mann made efforts that result to an organized, centralized, democratic American education while John Dewey was responsible for the laying down of American theories of democratic, science-respecting education.

Mann firmly believed that education helps to alleviate poverty and he stressed this belief in his Twelfth Annual Report on education. He was convinced that educated and trained individuals produced productive labor, and hence contributes to the prosperity of a nation (Filler 128). However, when Horace Mann assumed the leadership of the Board of Education in Massachusetts in 1837, he was confronted with a sad condition of education in America. American educational ideals were low and undemocratic.

Furthermore, schools were poorly organized and its curricula and methods were limited and needs modernization. On top of that, schools were in bad physical condition (Graves 254-255). In short, education during Mann's time was a neglected and more or less an unimportant part of American society. Mann worked hard to elevate the status of education in his time by promoting education through personal visits of schools in his circuit and publishing Annual Reports.

He also secured government funding for schools and established libraries and “ normal” training schools for teachers (Graves 256, 264). As a result, he earned the name the Father of American public education. Mann’s legacy was long lasting, for public schools flourished throughout America today and regarded by most as the best means for transmitting knowledge and training in skills. Hence, the educated American is equipped to be productive.

Mann adopted a democratic approach to education. He saw the public school as a means for equalizing education, where children of different social classes learned together. He believed that education should be “ universal” and “ free” (Graves 264). However, it is strange for modern minds that while Mann envisioned children of all classes learning together in schools he did not oppose segregation (“ Horace” 2001). Nevertheless, Mann’s “ universal” and “ free” view of education is still widely held in America today, except that in modern times school attendance is not only composed of individuals of different social classes but also of different races.

John Dewey on the other hand, proposed that the goal of education should produce democratic individuals for a democratic nation. He likened classrooms as representations of a democratic society. He reasoned that the success of a democratic nation lies on its educated people who had developed democratic knowledge and skills needed for a democratic society.

Dewey advocated learning by method type of education and not by memorization by repetition (Westbrook 172; Archambault 10-12). In short, his educational style was highly interactive and unites theory and practice. This kind of educational style had been proven effective for learning and

American schools today had lessons and curricula designed for both instructing and experiencing theories. Unlike Mann, Dewey believed that schools should not produce productive worker alone but a citizen whose skills and democratic experiences met the demands of a democratic society. For Dewey, acquiring this skill and knowledge is not dependent on the subject matter but on the child's own instinctive ability and power (Westbrook 177).

John Dewey's supports progressive education. As such, he liberated students from becoming a slave to traditional knowledge. For him the student is central to education. He encouraged scientific inquiry in the classroom. In fact, John Dewey was interested to "fuse the imperatives of science and nature, democracy and humanity" in educational instruction (McCluskey 177). In this sense, he has in some measure touched every stone in the modern American educational structure.

It can be said that Horace Mann laid the foundation for the effective operation of American public school while John Dewey provided the theory for it. Of the two, Dewey was more of the philosopher. Mann, on the other hand was not a philosopher, he was a practical man of action whose moral earnestness laid the foundation of American public schools (Graves 266).

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