Chapter 1

Traditional vs. Progressive Education
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Guide to Experience and Education

Traditional vs Progressive Education

Here are the main concepts about traditional and progressive education discussed in Dr Dewey’s Book “Experience and Education”:

✓ Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites—Either-Ors—with no intermediate possibilities. Ed philosophy is no exception.

✓ History of educational theory involve opposition between the idea that Education is development from within or from without. At present contrast between Traditional & progressive education exists.

✓ Traditional education—subject matter (information + skills) worked out in the past therefore chief business of the school is to transmit them to the new generation. It is imposition from outside (without).

✓ Developed or formed standards; rules of conduct, moral training; time-schedules; schemes of classification, of examination & promotion; & rules of order are patterns of organization. They are sharply marked off from other form of social organization i.e. family, routine life, work place etc.

✓ Three characteristics of traditional education fixed aims, fixed methods of instruction & fixed discipline, therefore to transmit the past culture to student it is necessary that students must be docile, receptive & obedient. Here books (textbooks especially) are representatives of the wisdom of the past. Teachers are instruments.

✓ New education (progressive education) is the criticism of traditional education & claims development from within.

✓ There is a wide gap between the mature or adult product (fixed subject matter or aims, method, discipline) and the experience & abilities of the young, therefore no active participation of learners occur. Learning is nothing but what already is in books & heads of elders within a society where change is the rule.
Main Differences between Traditional and Newer (Progressive) Education

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<th>Traditional Education</th>
<th>Progressive Ed (Opposed In Trad. Ed)</th>
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<td>Imposition from above</td>
<td>Cultivation of individuality</td>
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<td>External discipline</td>
<td>Free activity</td>
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<td>Learning from texts &amp; teachers</td>
<td>Learning through experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolated skills / tech. by drill</td>
<td>Acquisition of skills &amp; knowledge on personal will &amp; appeal</td>
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<td>Preparation for more or less remote future</td>
<td>Making the most of opportunities of present life</td>
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<td>Static aims &amp; materials</td>
<td>Changing world</td>
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✓ Generally, philosophy of new education in abstract principles may be sound yet it does not decide that they (Principles) could be worked out on practice.

✓ Every new movement / philosophy generally runs in the opposite extreme of existing philosophy hence it practically (new philosophy) runs short of the positive points / aspects of opposed philosophy. It is based on sheer opposition.

✓ For example, when external control prevailing in traditional education is opposed in new (progressive) education, it does not mean that there should be no external control or authority, but there must be true effort to finding the factors of control within an experience, and more effective source of authority. To cater the imposed knowledge, methods, and discipline does not mean that the knowledge & skill of mature person has no value for the experience of the immature.
✓ It means that **progressive education** based on personal experience may mean **more multiplied & intimate contacts** between the mature & the immature than ever existing in teacher education.

✓ For these reasons new education **does not solve any of the problems, rather it sets new problems**, which have to be worked out based on new philosophy of experience.

✓ In this regard, the **newer schools** (progressive schools) make **little or no effort to organize subject matter** of study in the name of **individual freedom**, as if direction & guidance by adults were an invasion individual freedom. **Focusing present** experience **does not mean that past has no role** to play in education. For these reasons, even progressive education proceeds merely towards opposite extreme of traditional education, therefore, **again it has become a dogma, a hurdle** for the proper development of learners.

✓ If new education (progressive education) opposes externally imposed knowledge (textbooks) and supports individual (learners) freedom then, **how could** they be designed to **teach & learn the things through personal experience**, and what should be the teacher’s role.

✓ If progressive education opposes ideas or knowledge about past as it gives little help in dealing with the issues of present & future, then, **how could we make education of the past (education as an end) as means to accomplish present & our future living.**

**Lot of work is to be done** to make new education a proper channel of development of an individual through his personal experience. These issues must not be left unsolved.