

E-Content

B.Ed.

Pragmatism

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Pragmatism

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Objectives:

Dear students, after going this e-tutorial you should be able to understand

- Meaning, philosophical assumptions and characteristics of pragmatism.
- Aims of education in pragmatic philosophy.
- Basic principles of pragmatic philosophy.

Introduction

The word pragmatism is derived from the Greek word “*Pragma*” which means action and “*Pagmatikos*” means utility. It was first *Charles Sanders Peirce* who introduced this word to the philosophy in 1878. The philosophy of pragmatic school is based on activity.



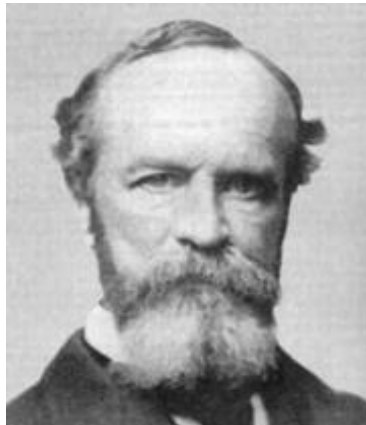
Charles Sanders Peirce

Source: <https://www.mkbergman.com/2069/how-i-study-c-s-peirce/>

Background

- The evidences of pragmatic philosophy can be seen in ancient Greek as philosophy of change which was brought forward by *Heraclitus of Greece* in B.C. 535.
- Pragmatism in its philosophical view is entirely different from other schools of thought. As all other schools rooted themselves either in the past or future, pragmatism confidently stands in the present.

- Unlike other philosophies of life and education that originated either in Europe or in the East, *pragmatism* originated in *North America*.
- In the 16th and 17th century in Europe Roman Catholics treated out the Protestants' in a very cruel and brutal way that resulted in a huge number of oppressed groups to migrate America.
- The place being novel and different for them they encountered novice problems and tried to find the solutions based on activity.
- These problems were believed to be arisen due to the interactions of people with different situations.
- A new belief came into existence that there is a need of new and latest ideas to tackle the emerging problems of new colors of life.
- The situations are thought to be good if the consequences of related activities are proved to be good.



William James

Source:

Philosophical Assumptions of Pragmatism

Ontological Belief

- Pragmatists believe that anything helps in achieving purposes and goals of life are real and true.
- Pragmatists believe that truth is that which works and can be verified by experience and public evidence.

- The pragmatists believe that truth is neither absolute, nor universal, nor eternal as the idealists say but it is immutable and is relative to man, time and place.
- There is no absolute, permanent reality; reality remains in a state of change.
- The world of reality is not 'made'; it is 'making'.
- The world is not a 'product'; it is a 'process'.
- Pragmatists believed that “man is the measure of all things”.
- Reality is open-ended and is characterized throughout by process and change.
- There is no transcendental reality ahead of human experience.
- Pragmatists have utilitarian approach; utility is the test of all truth and reality.
- The result or consequence of an action is decided by the worth of something as good or bad.
- Good results show the truth and validity of any principle or idea whereas bad results conclude to bad principles.
- Circumstances determine the beliefs and theories to be good or evil.

Epistemological Belief

- Pragmatists believe that truth is not diverse from knowledge.
- They believe anything that is knowledge must be true.
- Knowledge emerges from enquiry and experience of a person.
- All knowledge according to pragmatists is output of experience, activities and actions.

Axiological Belief

- Pragmatic conception of axiology is highly situational.
- Values are relative to time, place and circumstance.
- Valuable is that which contributes to human and social development.
- Human experience is the main source for values in life.
- Values are to be tested and re-examined the same way the scientific claims are subjected to verification.
- World serves as a laboratory for the development of values.
- Values are always in flux.

- Everyone should seek aims and values according to one's tendencies and abilities.
- Maximum premium upon human freedom in life is provided which goes with equality and fraternity.
- Everyone has the right to adjust to one's environment with ease and in conformity with one's rights and individuality.
- Since man is a social animal, one needs social circumstances to develop and acquire success in the society.
- Humans' aims and values make them successful in developing their personality.

Principles of Education in Pragmatism

- Pragmatists believe in the truth that can be tested and verified.
- There is no permanent reality, reality is dynamic and is always in a state of constant flux.
- Pragmatism emphasizes on the principle of utility.
- Humans learn by interaction instead of mere contemplation.
- Pragmatism gives importance to activity based learning.
- Any idea which is useful to us is proper and right otherwise it is not beneficial.

Aims of Education in Pragmatism

- No fixed aims in advance.
- Education is its own end not the means.
- Aims are revised as the child advances in growth.
- Human welfare or better living may be taken as the aim.
- Education is growth and is bounded by here and now.
- Education is not the preparation of life but life itself.
- Individuality and freedom of the child.
- Development of activity and experience based learning.
- Better living and democratic ideals are the aims of education.

Methods of Teaching in Pragmatism

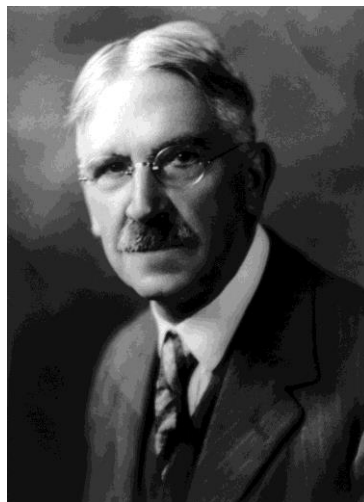
- Pragmatism follows the project method or experimental activity method leading to integration.
- It follows the problem-solving method and believes in action rather than reflection.
- It stands for practical work rather than book-reading.
- It believes in laboratory rather than in library.
- Listening is no learning and lecturing is no teaching but doing is learning and discussing is teaching.
- When a belief works we have a moral right to hold it.
- It accepts the method of integration and cares for studies.
- Pragmatic or practical methods relate learning to the life of the pupils.
- It believes in the activity schools and not in listening schools.

Curriculum in Pragmatism

- The universe is the subject matter for the pragmatists and any educative experience is the subject matter of the curriculum, thus any experience is contributing to growth.
- They did not believe in fixed curriculum or fixed instructional techniques.
- The subject matter exists ready to be explored, but the real apprehension must always be for the interaction of the pupil with the subject matter of his present needs, capacities and concerns.
- Curriculum should bring the disciplines together to emphasize solving problems in an interdisciplinary way.
- Pragmatists believe that learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental inquiry.
- It should prepare students for citizenship, daily living, and future careers.
- A study of social, economic and political problems, natural resources and their maintenance and other such studies should form the curriculum.
- It believes in core-curriculum and not in subject matter curriculum.
- It follows a suggested list of project activities.
- It follows activity curriculum and not in water-tight subject-matter curriculum.
- There should be no external examinations according to this school.

Discipline in Pragmatism

- Pragmatism favors freedom for children.
- The teacher, acting as an advisor and guide, and the self active learning of the students should together promote the discipline.
- *John Dewey* believes that both interests and discipline are closely related to each other.
- Pragmatism advocates the merging of play with work.
- Students should develop an attitude of seriousness, consideration and sincerity as well as self confidence, self reliance, sympathy and fellow feeling. Formation of these social attributes result in social discipline and moral obligation.
- It believes in discipline by free will, not imposed by an external authority; but the child voluntarily imposes it upon himself.
- Learning and teaching should be motivated by child's interest and purposes.



John Dewey

The Role of the Teacher in Pragmatism

- The role of the teacher is to educate students successfully.
- The teacher is to be a guide, a co-worker and a participant.
- He is the adviser but not a spectator as in Naturalism, and he has to make the child competent to deal with the problems of later life.
- The teacher from pragmatists view is not a dictator but only a leader of group activities.
- He should not overshadow the personality of the students.

- The teacher has to plan and organize the teaching-learning process and should create learning opportunities for experimentation.
- Teachers must not impose themselves onto the learners and should help them to build socially and intellectually with equal opportunities.
- The teacher must capture the student's interest and build the natural motivation that exists.
- Teachers need to vary their teaching methods to accommodate each individual's learning style.
- Not all children learn at the same pace and at the same point; therefore the teacher must fluctuate his/her style.
- *Dewey* believed that knowledge should be organized and related to current experiences.
- The teacher for the pragmatists is a member of the learning group who serves in the capacity of helper, guide and arranger of experiences.

Conclusion

Pragmatism is a thought to change the conventional educational methods. It welcomes and proposes any idea which is testable and which leads to favorable outcome. The emphasis of pragmatism is on action rather than thought. It accepts everything that has practical consequences. Pragmatists emphasized the "plastic" nature of reality and the practical function of knowledge. For pragmatists education is about life and growth. It has accelerated the pace of democracy in educational institutes.

Check Your Progress

1. Define pragmatism?
2. Explain in your own words the relevance of pragmatism in Indian education system?
3. Write down the basic postulates of pragmatism?

➤ **Suggested Online Resources**

www.epgp.inflibnet.ac.in
<https://swayam.gov.in/>
<http://cec.nic.in/E-Content/>
http://emmrc.uok.edu.in/Main/ViewPage.aspx?Page=emrc_learning_corner

➤ **Suggested Readings**

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