



Locating the Antique Master of Education: Twenty First Century Reception of Herbert Spencer

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ABSTRACT

Nineteenth century England saw a clear and radical change in the field of scientific thought that changed mode of thinking of contemporary science. Herbert Spencer was the first innovative thinker to realize such sweeping change. This research article will explore the essence of Spencer's idea of education, ideal educational system and the method of teaching. This paper will equally make survey of Spencer as an educationist. Twenty first century has come across an enormous social change and thereby the reception has also change. This small excerpt will map the mode of 21st century reception of Spencer.

Keywords: Spencer's Idea of Education, Scientific Trends in Education, Twentieth Century Reception of Spencer

INTRODUCTION:

Industrial Revolution (1840) and popularity of science came to the forefront hand in hand. Great Exhibition (1862) in England and the establishments of Crystal Palace had been the two towering achievements in the fields of science and technology. Scientific inventions and technological discoveries brought about a sweeping alteration in the social life and standard of living. Life became more comfortable than ever. Even the ideological setup of the British people changed hurriedly. British people started experiencing a new dimension and new horizon. Horizons of expectation started expanding with new possibilities. Being drastically influenced by such possibilities British people started realizing the fundamental nature of science in daily life. It was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who taught such truth through theory and academia. This research paper will be an endeavour to assess Mr. Spencer in the 21st century.

HERBERT SPENCER AND NEO-SCIENCE:

Started his career as an assistant to schoolmaster, Herbert Spencer has become almost synonymous with the word evolution. He is often titled as the pioneer of modern science what was known as neo-science. Neo-science was always a possibility. Psycho-biographers often claim that Herbert Spencer was the first thinker who realized the infiltration of science in education and educational system and even educational methods. Neo-science came with enormous prospect that the influence was noticeable everywhere. Charles Darwin was the most successful user of neo-science. Before Darwin, Herbert Spencer realized the quintessence of neo-science. He came to the realization that knowledge is not the result of objective observation, but it has a moral ground. Good education should supply knowledge with moral education.

SPENCER'S IDEA OF EDUCATION:

Herbert Spencer has thoroughly been experimentalist. His idea of education is thoroughly experimental. Good education must place the learner in situation where one will learn by himself or herself from sheer objective attachment and observation. In a sense, learner should be positioned in the midst of objective reality. This objective reality will bring the consciousness in the mind of the learners. Mr. Spencer has been realist enough in his idea of preparation of the mind of the learners. The mind of the learners should be prepared in way that it will realize itself that in order to live a successful life with comfort one needs good and effective education. Spencer believed

that man is born imperfect being. Education removes such shortcomings. Rewarding education must prepare the mind of the learners with some basic demands such as self preservation, earning a living, upbringing of children, good citizenship and the proper usage of leisure. Every booming education should teach its learners the means of self preservation or defense. Education should pave the paths for sustaining the daily needs. Effectual education must also bring on the mind set up to the parents of learners in order to provide proper nourishments and nurtures. A child is tomorrow's citizen. Ideal education should hail the quality of citizenship. Mr. Spencer was rational and punctual enough in the utilization of time. The secret of all good education is to provide work culture. Time can best be defeated through the proper usage of it.

SPENCER'S PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT OF TEACHING:

Utilitarianism is the word that best illustrate Mr. Herbert Spencer and his concept of education. He was thoroughly rational in his concept of education and teaching with humanitarian touch. He believed in the seven pedagogical maxims such as from easy to difficult, from known to unknown, from definite to indefinite, from concrete to abstract, from empirical to rational etc. For easy reception of the learners at first the easy topic should be introduced and then gradually comparatively better complex idea should be introduced. For the easy understanding of the learners unknown topic should be introduced with the most familiar and known story and thereby it will be easier for the receiver to access it from the primary level, what is known as entry level. In the same way, in order to provide indefinite knowledge one must start the entry level with definite knowledge. One again, when one wants to give the concept of circle to learners one can start with idea of round ball. Then the journey will from definite to indefinite. Good teaching must inculcate the movement from empirical to rational. The mind of child is always curious to compare and contrast. Through compare and contrast one will empirically demonstrate. From demonstration one will gradually form rational knowledge.

DIRECTING A HEALTHY COMPETITION:

The story of Herbert Spencer is the story of a scientist, thinking rationally for social and educational welfare. He is often quoted for his famous slogan "Survival of the fittest". Every civilization starts with struggles and battles. Finally, the fittest one survives. Likewise, this timeless struggles good education must prepare a mind for healthy competition, where each one will exert their best to surpass the other, who is equally

pouring forth his or her best. Ideal education should direct each to prepare a healthy mind to compete. Defeat or win matter little. What matters much is the healthy competition. With healthy competition finally the best from each can be extracted. Healthy competition is more a help, less a hindrance. He rightly declared:

"Children should be led to make their own investigations, and to draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible, and induced to discover as much as possible."

TWENTY FIRST CENTURY RECEPTION OF HERBERT SPENCER:

Enormous growth and development of science and technology have redefined the postmodern knowledge and its distribution. Bookish knowledge is replaced by technology-based knowledge. Text is substituted by hypertext. Immense participation of electronic media in our day to day life has complicated the issue more. The ideal of more effective and fruitful teaching has been made possible with the successful use of

scientific discovery. The participation of science and scientific tools in teaching does not matter much. Herbert Spencer talked about the scientific formation of the mind set up of the learners. This scientific approach towards education and its distribution will enrich both the giver of knowledge and the taker of it.

CONCLUSION:

It is often claimed that Herbert Spencer has not been much original. His idea of education may sound as the echo of the ancient masters of education this series of our articles. Mr. Spencer was equally conscious about changing and evolutionary thought in the world of education. 'Herbertian Method' is still widely practiced educational method in our changing world. In the 21st century when the teachers are using smart room and smart board, the direct attachment of education with science can never be denied. Science and technology are playing hand in hand in order to uplift the learning process. Spencer did not directly indicate that. He meant the scientific approach to education, which is, on the whole, a boon not a ban.

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