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Two Key Theories in Education
Research Theory, Design, and Methods (RSCH - 8100D - 5)
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The following describes the philosophies of Confucius (Confucianism) and John Dewey (pragmatism/instrumentalism/experimentalism) and their views toward vocational, technical, general academic instruction, and the development of morals and values as espoused throughout Asia and America during a span of history from 551 BCE to 1949 CE. This is not intended to present an entire picture of design purpose and implementation, however, will focus on the paths of these originators of theory from their earliest. The purpose behind investigating these individuals and their work is to identify and acknowledge the intellectual genealogy of inter-related theories and the process of synthesis that make current prevailing philosophies and practices possible.

Confucius: Pragmatist and the first public school teacher

Two authors should be credited with inscribing Chinese history and with so creating the legacy of the Qin Dynasty (221-201 BCE), scholarship in China as it is known today; Ssu-ma T'an (Sima T'an, birth date unknown - 110 BCE) and Ssu-ma Chi'en (Sima Qian, ca. 145 - 86 BCE). During the time they lived education centered on six arts: propriety, music, archery, chariot driving, writing and mathematics. Of the literature that has survived, according to T'an, the major philosophies of the day were recognized as the Hundred Schools of Thought whose most enduring legacy includes the teachings of Confucius (*Kongzi*). Confucius was considered the first public school teacher in China, breaking the monopoly of private schools under control of the emperor. He is said to have taught nearly 3,000 students. During his lifetime, although he traveled extensively throughout China's kingdoms, he never reached a level of prominence among rulers.

Confucius is credited with establishing the content and methods of teaching, and the concept of how people should relate to one another. He taught the concept of "filial piety (Five Relationships)," the hierarchy of relationships from the national level to the household and community. Government is to have a role in making the lives of people better and absolute ethical values exist. The order of filial piety is: allegiance and respect between king-minister, father-son, husband-wife, older brother-younger brother and, friend-friend. The husband and wife relationship is the only one which crosses genders.

Within the Five Relationships, Confucius defined "Five Virtues": benevolence (generosity), righteousness (doing the right things), propriety (behaving correctly in society), knowledge (learning) and sincerity (genuineness). The universal "Golden Rule" or (in the negative) "Silver Rule" as it is sometimes called, is attributed to Confucius. "What you do not like done to you, do not do to others." The rule applied to all. Confucius maintained that a ruler must be virtuous and strive to better peoples' lives. Civilization is to be valued and humans are more important than nature. According to Confucius the so-called "superior man" did not exist.

Although most of Confucius' work was destroyed during the Qin Dynasty, enough survived to piece together the essence of meaning and detail to form a picture of his work. He is credited with having written or edited the *Five Classics* text: *Book of Changes (I Ching)*, *Classic of Odes* (poetry and the arts), *Classic of History (Shi)*, *Classic of Rites* (social propriety); the *Spring and Autumn Annals* a record of the state of Lu, Confucius' home State, is the only book he specifically claims to have written. The *Analects* is a collection of conversations Confucius is said to have had with rulers of the time. His followers formed the school of thought known as the Literati (*Ju chia*).

Among the scholars who developed and refined Confucius' philosophies is Mencius (Mengzi, 371-289 BCE) who preached a humanist point of view that men are by nature good. Mencius made clear that rulers empowered to rule responsibly through the Mandate from Heaven. Rulers were accountable to the people and, so long as a kingdom was at peace rulers maintained their status. Diametrically opposed to Mencius, Xunzi (c. 300-237 BCE) viewed mankind as inherently evil and viewed heaven as merely the natural world. Xunzi's pragmatic inclinations were soon adapted into the Legalist School of Thought (*Fa chia*) and by the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) as a method of grasping and maintaining control of the population. According to Xunzi human desires are innate at birth and virtue is obtained through education. Later, during the Song Dynasty (960—1279 CE) a resurgence of Confucius' thoughts fueled the Neo-Confucius Movement, an amalgam of Confucianism and Buddhism.

Legalism lent well to controlling the largely uneducated population by the feudal hierarchy of princes, lords and kings. The country was still widely divided into territories and as the kingdoms grew through the collapse and overtaking of smaller fiefdoms, a strong centralized government was needed. The Legalists were known to extol and reward the virtue of social propriety and punish vice. Legalism and Confucianism evolved to form a national system of control and protections during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) that would direct the central government of China through the end of all dynasties in the early 20th century.

We know Confucianism and Legalism today particularly as it was represented the Imperial Examination (*Kējǔ*) system which officially began during the Sui Dynasty (581-618 CE) and ended in 1905. The "Cadre System" of ranking Party leaders, civil servants in administrative institutions, public organizations and (in a separate category) military leaders, was borrowed from Russia during the 1950's was also loosely based on *Kējǔ*. The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE; *Gao Kao*) we know it today was established in 1952 under the Ministry of Education.

John Dewey: Education in America

At the end of a 1993 study based on two related surveys ten years apart, the authors state "Therefore, it seems fair to conclude that Dewey, Bonser, Warner, and Maley have contributed to the development of technology education philosophy and that the philosophy they have espoused is still the basis for making curriculum decisions in technology education." (Kirkwood, Foster, and Bartow, 1994)

Through Dewey's visits between 1919 and 1921 he became widely known in China as the "Western Confucius." The title was attributed to Dewey for his effective lectures and writing but, also for his struggle for acceptance of his teachings and rejection of his philosophies, similar to that of Confucius. His teachings have not gone without detractors even in more modern times, from people of both China and the West; educational traditions are deeply rooted in culture.

"In discussing Dewey's thinking, it is easy to draw a conceptual map linking the words experience, truth, knowledge, freedom, education, democracy, and community. The outcome of making a sentence with these words could be knowledge is a common good, obtained from experience, by educated persons, in a democratic system. This system warrants the pursuit and communication of truth in an environment of personal freedom" (Otaola, 2004)

Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, October 20, 1859, three years following the end of the Civil War, and coincidentally one month before the release of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Darwin's writing would have great influence on Dewey's belief system as both an evolutionist in terms of education and democracy. Dewey's father was a merchant who served as quartermaster in the Civil War and mother devoutly religious. He attended public schools and in 1875 attended University of Vermont; majoring in philosophy.

In 1882, Dewey attended Johns Hopkins University where he studied philosophy and psychology. At the beginning of his studies Dewey's philosophical bend typified contemporary beliefs early in his academic career; he was heavily influenced by the Hegelian (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, (1770-1831). Dewey's singular Christian orientation stressed "idealistic" metaphysics, the notion of absolute transcendence, humans directing nature, and a structure of ethics to attaining "self-realization."

It was at Johns Hopkins where Dewey met Charles Sanders Peirce, originator of philosophical pragmatism. During his tenure as professor of philosophy (age 24) at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (1884-1888), Dewey met George Sylvester Morris; with Morris guidance Dewey completed his dissertation (now lost) focusing on psychology espoused by Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), and further, by Max Weber (1864-1920) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Dewey replaced his Hegelian metaphysical understanding with a more naturalistic perception. It was at Johns Hopkins where Dewey also met Edward Alesworth Ross (1866-1951), whose academic history is both lauded and condemned as a proponent of social design.

Leading the way in Dewey's transformation of beliefs was William James (1892-1924). "James' *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) was one of the most influential books Dewey ever read, the basis of which focused on functionalism in psychology and pragmatism. James' theory of mind as 'the objective, conscious process by which the organism and its environment become integrated,' and his view 'that organism and environment mutually determine each other, that thinking is simply a function of the interaction between the two, like breathing and walking,' became central to Dewey's own views." (Dykhuisen, 1973)

Dewey's brand of pragmatism has come to be associated with the naturalistic view that as he expressed as a continuum (seamlessness) between the philosophies of logic and the natural sciences. Dewey referred to his philosophy not as pragmatism, but as "instrumentalism" or "experimentalism," which he held the belief that truth (small "t") is an instrument used by human beings to solve their problems. Large "T" is the universal truth that may be revealed at the end of time. Since problems change, then so must truth ergo; since problems change, truth changes, and therefore reality is not eternal.

Dewey wrote many articles and books throughout his life, his earliest works included: *Psychology* (1887) and *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897). With an overtly Hegelian emphasis *Psychology* became a commercial success but was heavily criticized by William James and other renowned educators of the time for its metaphysical basis. His second book, *The School and Society* (1889), was a collection of talks to parents of the University Elementary School together with some previously published essays. Dewey's most enduring writing came in 1901 with *The Child and the Curriculum* in which his theories and beliefs toward education are best described:

The theoretical gap between child-centered and subject-centered curriculum is due to failure to recognize interaction between child and curriculum.

Emphasis on need for "studies" to be "*psychologized*" in order to be taught to children.

Directions for growth found in child's own activities.

Interests provide leverage for growth.

Teacher's job to select appropriate stimuli to bring out desired interests and impulses.

Students MUST experience in order to learn.

Tendency to use "interest" extrinsically rather than intrinsically criticized.

Dewey's books on education also include: *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1916); *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (1933); and, *Experience and Education* (1938).

John Dewey: Education in China

Dewey arrived in Shanghai the day before the New Culture Movement erupted in the streets, May 3, 1919. The following day, May 4th became marked by student demonstrations in Beijing. Working class people began expressing their frustrations over the powerlessness and corruption of the government, foreign extraterritoriality, and the failure to reunite Shandong Province (home of Confucius) through the Treaty of Versailles following WWI.

During the following 2 year and 2 month period, Dewey toured and lectured in Japan and China. He spoke from some 78 different podiums to audiences, some in series of 15-20 times (Keenen, p. 30-31) and brought with him his views of teaching, learning, and democracy. In his

in 1899 book titled *School and Society*, Dewey wrote “Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.”

Dewey’s views have dramatically altered education philosophy in China and opened the door to a melding of East and West not to be undone by time or political change.

“Today, there are people who claim Dewey was not an adult education theorist. That was not how it appeared in 1920s China, where he claimed that teachers and learners should be on an equal footing: Teachers should consider themselves learners. The context for learning was important, and education and democracy were inextricably linked. Dewey had an immense impact on all forms of Chinese education and, in the minds of leading comparativists (e.g., Gu, 2001), reinforced reformist impulses of the May Fourth (1919) science and democracy movement.” (Mitter, 2004; as cited in Boshier and Yan, 2007)

A great many of the philosophies addressing vocational (career development) and arts (including development of the whole child) developed in the early 1900’s overlap and are interwoven. *Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act of 1917* established funding for vocational education but also requiring states to set up boards, essentially creating a divide between vocational education and the general curriculum. The next great leaps in advancement toward the current state of education in America did not take place until the President Truman’s *Higher Education for American Democracy* report (*Truman Commission Report*) in 1947 following WWII, preceding the Russian launch of the satellite Sputnik (1957); *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform*, President Ronald Reagan’s commissioned report conducted in 1983, and President George W. Bush’s, *A Test of Leadership*, sometimes referred to as the *Spellings Report* (2005) impact changes marking differences between the subtle origins of education and it’ latest shape.

A few of the significant contributors to the theories of Confucius and John Dewey can be referred to including: Mencius, Ssu-ma T’an (Sima T’an) and Ssu-ma Chi’en (Sima Qian), Victor della Vos, Uno Cygnaeus, Otto Salomon, Charles Darwin, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, Karl Marx, William James, Hu Shi, Frederick Gordon Bonser, Charles Sanders Peirce, W.E. B. Du Bois, Bertrand Russell, Anna "Lois" Coffey Mossman, and Evelyn Dewey (The Dalton Laboratory Plan). Competing theorist and advocates in America include: Friedrich W. Taylor (Taylorism), David Samuel Snedden (1868-1951), William Heard Kilpatrick, and E. L. Thorndike (The Project Method).

Noteworthy domestic and world events, politics and legislation, affecting vocational, technical, adult education and general studies have taken place during decisive and/or affecting periods of change in dominant education philosophies. In chronological order the list includes: the *Open Door Policy* (China, 1839-1979), Taiping Rebellion (China, 1850-64), the 1876 Centennial-Philadelphia, the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*, the Boxer Rebellion (China, 1898-1901), collapse of Imperial China (1911) World War I (1914-18), *Treaty of Versailles* (1919), *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (Japan, 1940), *Tripartite Agreement* (Japan, Italy, Germany, 1940), World War II (1939-45), the Yalta Agreement (1945), and establishment of the People’s Republic of China (1949).

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