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## **Pragmatist Idea of Democracy in Education and Its Meaning for Educational Innovation in Vietnam Today**

The pragmatist philosophy of education aspires to build a universal education to teach people how to break old habits and switch to new creative thinking. Pragmatism offers an educational philosophy that sees students attending school in order to learn how to live in a community that gives them real, guided experiences focusing on their ability to contribute to society. Pragmatism led to education reform in the 19th century and contributed to the development of modern world education. Vietnam fundamentally and comprehensively renews its own education to integrate with global education. This paper uses analytical, comparative and explanatory methods to explain the foundations of the philosophy of pragmatism. The pragmatist philosophy of education is the basis for building democratic education in Vietnam today.

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## **Research Questions**

In what does the educational philosophy of pragmatism manifest itself? What is the educational philosophy of the pragmatist teacher in Vietnam?

## **Methods**

This paper uses the philosophical methods employed by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey to formulate pragmatism's basic ideas about education. The ideas proposed by the aforementioned pragmatists are also used to compare and define their relationship in order to create a new philosophy (theory) of democratic education. Based on the assumptions of pragmatism to show democracy in education, the paper explains the application of pragmatism to educational reform in Vietnam today. Pragmatism, then, is to be what unites education. For development means more activities, more new tasks, more new solutions, all with the aim of creating a network of social relations.

At the same time, the paper uses the comparative method to juxtapose the arguments of pragmatists on educational philosophies to determine the tendency and degree of difference between them. Accordingly, the paper pays attention to the general characteristics and different educational concepts of pragmatists, and, based on the evaluation of differences, seeks the optimal solution for specific cases of the Vietnamese educational system.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Since the philosophy of education is focused on answering the nature of education to formulate its goals, educational programs and

methods intend to help teachers know how students perceive their actions. What is needed to help students?<sup>1</sup>

Around 1870 in the United States, the educational philosophy of pragmatism became a third alternative to both the tradition of analytical philosophy and the “Continent” philosophy worldwide. Pragmatism was founded by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), developed and popularized by William James (1842–1910), and redirected to politics and education by John Dewey (1859–1952). It was adopted by Willard Van Orman Quine, Wilfrid Sellars, Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Robert Brandom in the late 20th century,<sup>2</sup> and neo-pragmatists following the direction of linguistic philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

First, pragmatism is the practice of democracy in education. Students are free to make and appreciate creative achievements and personalities, so pragmatism promotes agility, flexibility and understanding in adapting to reality in any situation. In education, students have the conditions to live and appreciate the effectiveness and usefulness of activities for their work. Therefore, democracy in education is the value of teachers’ trust in students’ capacity of experiencing real life for themselves. The teacher is one who makes the student’s learning purposeful and conveys a sense of reality in education.<sup>4</sup> Dewey viewed democracy as an ideal of life associated with a standard that reconciles individual

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Buchanan, D. J. Forster, S. Douglas, S. Nakar, H. J. Boon, T. Heath, P. Heyward, L. D’Olimpio, J. Ailwood, and S. Eacott, “Philosophy of Education in a New Key: Exploring New Ways of Teaching and Doing Ethics in Education in the 21st Century,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2021): 1–26.

<sup>2</sup> H. S. Thayer, *Pragmatism, the Classic Writings: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Clarence Irving Lewis, John Dewey, George Herbert Mead* (Hackett Publishing, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> R. J. Bernstein, *The pragmatic turn* (Polity, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> H. Putnam, “Pragmatism, Relativism, and the Justification of Democracy,” in *Campus Wars* (Routledge, 2021), 264–273.

and collective interests.<sup>5</sup> The presence of democracy in education is a way to realize social democracy. Social democracy is a society with a strict, humane legal system. Only a democratic society can meet the needs of every human being. Especially in education, democracy is the highest expression of respect for human beings. Democracy in education is a promotion of respect for people, a contribution to the common life, an independence in all their activities. Therefore, the quality of education is the quality of human life that meets the needs of every individual in society.<sup>6</sup>

Second, based on the presence of democracy in education, pragmatism assumes that each individual in the education system is a practical experience. Pragmatism expresses the value of education for students through the teacher's knowledge and work to direct their lives and development. Education is aimed to teach students practical things for life and encourage them to advance and thus be better people. Therefore, it is considered as the theory and tool of modern life.<sup>7</sup>

Pragmatist idea of democracy in education explains the social function of education. It indicates the purpose, program and method of forming students into spiritually free people, that is, capable of developing their own personality. Only democracy helps teachers to promote creativity. Only it helps to find and appoint creative teachers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. Dewey, *The Essential Dewey: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, vol. 1 (Indiana University Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> R. B. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> S. Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics* (Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Dewey, *The Essential Dewey*.

## Results and Discussion

### *Democracy in Education Is a Social Function*

Pragmatism holds that the function of education is to prepare people to bring democracy into future society. Schools are representatives of a larger society. They are small societies. Therefore, the school must provide all the activities that make up the expected life of the society. The school provides social activities. These activities provide students with beneficial citizenship training.<sup>9</sup> Dewey argued that in American democracy government is “for people” and not just for the people. Because, according to Dewey, the most important thing in a democracy is what happens before the voting: thinking, discussing, and debating. He believed that democracy is both a political system and a moral ideal with the active participation of people. Therefore, in practical education, students must work together: they must undertake tasks related to real-world problems and learn to work as a team.<sup>10</sup> Cooperative activities instill in students the beneficial qualities of social life (compassion, ability to give and receive, being humane, spirit of sacrifice and tolerance) and are invaluable moral training.<sup>11</sup>

Democracy in education is an opportunity for the student, it is the right to learn and develop personal competencies. Teachers have autonomy, they choose their own materials for an appropriate program, they are responsible for their teaching methods to fit each student. Teachers must be able to explain to their students why they think their way of

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<sup>9</sup> K. T. Pham, “The Concept of Pragmatism and Its Impact on Education in the Vietnamese Context,” *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 11, no. 4 (2021): 1453–1466.

<sup>10</sup> R. Herheim, T. Werler & K. H. Hauge, *Lived Democracy in Education: Young Citizens’ Democratic Lives in Kindergarten, School and Higher Education* (Routledge, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> J. Dewey, “The Challenge of Democracy to Education,” in *America’s Public Philosopher* (Columbia University Press, 2021), 30–39.

teaching is appropriate. The school administration system is aware that they are there to support and help the best teachers and the best students. Teachers cannot impose their beliefs on students. Democracy in school is in the form of conversation, exchange of ideas, discussion and coming to an independent decision. Before citizens implement democracy in society, they will learn it in school. Democracy is about expanding voting rights and equipping citizens with the ability to take responsibility for making informed and voluntary decisions that lead to the common good.<sup>12</sup> If democracy requires informed, educated, and wise citizens, then education must have a moral purpose.

Democracy in education has been a focus of Vietnamese education in recent years. The Ministry of Education of Vietnam has issued regulations for implementing democracy in schools and public educational institutions under the national education system.<sup>13</sup>

The pragmatist idea of democracy in education shapes the current implementation of democracy in education worldwide.<sup>14</sup> Education in any country depends on the quality of political institutions and the level of economic development of that country. Democracy in education is the goal, the way and the result of innovation, and progress. In Vietnam, the process of comprehensive renovation of the country and democratization of social life has made social democracy in general and democracy in education in particular the target and driving force of new changes. The social function of education is to improve the quality of education and help students build Vietnam's future creative and proac-

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<sup>12</sup> C. Hookway, "Pragmatism: Commonsense and the Limits of Science," in *Proper Ambition of Science* (London–New York: Routledge, 2000), 103–121.

<sup>13</sup> M. o. E. a. T. Vietnam, *Decision No. 04/2000/QĐ-BGD-DT, Regulation on Implementation of Democracy in School Operations* (2000).

<sup>14</sup> J. Dewey, "Pragmatic America," in *America's Public Philosopher* (Columbia University Press, 2021), 49–54.

tive culture. This is the very inner core of education and its innovation in Vietnam.

*Educational Objectives Are in Line with  
Learners' Psychology and Living Conditions*

Pragmatism seeks the harmonious development of education, whether physical, intellectual, social, or artistic.<sup>15</sup> Pragmatism assumes an active life that is constantly changing, so the purpose of education must be dynamic. Education is related to human life: it must help students meet their biological and social needs. Pragmatism in education is about enabling the student to create value in their lives. Therefore, the purpose of education is to direct the student's drives, interests, desires, and abilities to satisfy them so that the student feel comfortable in their environment.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, pragmatism argues that human beings are biological and social organisms, so education goes in the direction of developing social skills in students. Every student should be an influential member of society. Education must then meet his own needs as well as the needs of the society. Therefore, education aims to train students to solve current problems and adapt effectively to the social environment. The student's perspective must be dynamic so that the student can change according to the changing situation. Society is constantly in motion and evolving, so education must be a place to cultivate an active, adaptable, resourceful, and entrepreneurial culture under all conditions. The mind of an educated student will have the power to create values in an unknown future. Education must therefore empower students to solve the problems of their future lives.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> N. Uralova, "World Experience in the Historical Dynamics of Continuous Education," *Pindus Journal of Culture, Literature, and ELT* 6 (2021): 70–74.

<sup>16</sup> M. E. Jonas, "Dewey's Conception of Interest and Its Significance for Teacher Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 43, no. 2 (2011): 112–129.

<sup>17</sup> N. Gross, "A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms," *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 3 (2009): 358–379.

Education must inspire confidence and excitement in learners. It must also adapt to social conditions. Therefore, pragmatism believes that school is a social environment for learners, not a place that prepares them for a future life in heaven. With this approach, pragmatism fosters the construction of an education in which learning goes hand in hand with practice and action, and reasoning is closely related to reality.<sup>18</sup>

Since education is life itself, schools are inseparable from the actual activities of society. Therefore, when imparting knowledge, teachers should not impose it on students and force them to memorize it. In relation to education, pragmatism also cannot accept the concept of “one size fits all.” Teachers must be aware of and respect the differences among students. Education must be a process that belongs to the student, not the teacher. Education is a process in which the student is at the center. In other words, education must be a deeply democratic process.<sup>19</sup>

In Vietnam, the educational goal is the comprehensive development of students’ abilities and qualities. Meeting the requirements of social development is the philosophy of innovation, education and teaching in Vietnam today. The whole and comprehensive renewal of education must aim at the comprehensive development of learners’ abilities and qualities, especially the ability to build a society of “rich people, strong country, democracy, justice, civilization.” This is the highest goal governing the whole process of innovation and development of education in Vietnam today.

In the process of achieving educational goals, Vietnam absorbs democratic ideas in education in the following points:

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<sup>18</sup> Dewey, *The Essential Dewey*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

1. *Democracy in teaching and learning*: students are actively involved in their learning process. Students are central figures and play an active and proactive role in the learning process.

2. *Democracy in the socialization of education*: creating favorable conditions for people to have the opportunity to learn throughout life. At the same time, democracy in education also shows that the whole society joins together to participate in the education of students to form a social person.

3. *Democracy in education with school management*: to promote democracy in teaching and learning, and at the same time the need to fight against radical democracy, that is, democracy that does not conform to the principles of schooling. In teaching, all different opinions must be discussed democratically, frankly, and teachers must run the school so that democracy be used to disclose both financial information and the quality of education in teaching.

*The Educational Program Must Be  
Associated with the Student's Life*

The purpose of education was to be reflected in the curriculum. Pragmatist goals can be found in a pragmatic curriculum. The curriculum framework is based on certain fundamentals. These are utility, interest, experience and integration. Practical utility is the slogan of pragmatism.<sup>20</sup>

Democracy in the curriculum is an inevitable need. Therefore, subjects useful to students should be included in the curriculum. The subjects of vocational usefulness should find a place in the curriculum.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> S. Gerber, "Developmental-Pragmatic Approaches/Strategies," in *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders* (Springer, 2021), 1384–1394.

<sup>21</sup> A. Lever and D. Gerber, "Pragmatism and Epistemic Democracy," *Raisons politiques* 81, no. 1 (2021): 5–10.

The curriculum for young students must be different from the existing educational program to include many activities applicable to social life. Topics such as psychology and sociology related to human behavior should be included in the curriculum. Pragmatists argue that subjects that help solve practical life problems should be included in the curriculum, especially at the elementary stage.<sup>22</sup>

William James dealt with the individual, both a teacher and a student, rather than with abstractions. He learned much from his own stance as an individual. James believed that teachers who guide students through moving objects (e.g., events and occurrences) possess a wonderful level of quality that the student discovers, learns, and attempts to achieve.<sup>23</sup>

Dewey's educational goal is to help students realize how the dynamics of knowledge and learning are rooted in the learner's experience.<sup>24</sup> Dewey proposed a three-tiered general education program. The first for elementary school students who focus on doing and making activities, such as starting a garden in the schoolyard, drawing banners, etc. By learning and acting in this way, students must solve problems in the process: hypothesis, plan, implementation and verification. The second stage is learning history and geography through activities and projects, helping students develop perception and master concepts of time (past, present, future) and space. Human experience does not happen in space, but in the flow of time and space. The third stage is learning. Science, according to Dewey, consists not only of the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, etc.), but also of the humanities. Science gives us

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<sup>22</sup> J. R. Batista de Souza, P. L. d. O. Borba, L. C. Pan & R. E. Lopes, "'Inclusion' and 'Democracy' in Education: An Exploration of Concepts and Ideas for Occupational Therapists," *World Federation of Occupational Therapists Bulletin* (2021): 101–113.

<sup>23</sup> W. James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*, vol. 10 (Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> J. Dewey, "Democracy in Education," *The Elementary School Teacher* 4, no. 4 (1903): 193–204.

generally reliable results, not absolute truths, because it must constantly test them.<sup>25</sup>

Dewey believed that individual subjects should not be taught separately, without regard to each other, but should be taught in such a way that students realize that they are interrelated. For example, mathematics should not focus only on solving equations or calculating the derivative of a function, as is often done in traditional teaching, but rather on relating derivatives (rates of change) to practical issues, such as the world population explosion (World History).<sup>26</sup>

The idea of practical learning is that education should be applied to the real world. For example, if teachers teach students to live in an urban area, there may not be much practical application to agricultural science. Or, if they teach at a school for farmers' children, they probably will not need to teach art history.

Dewey rejected the idea that elementary school teachers should teach all subjects. Dewey particularly emphasized that the teaching profession requires that teachers have life experience, experience that relates to the subject matter of the lesson and the life of the school. At the same time, to impart their experience, teachers must use a variety of methods that are rare in public schools. In a Dewey school, each teacher specializes in a particular area and works with other teachers to plan activities and projects. Students participate in shopping and art projects, field trips, science lab experiments, games, stories, and discussions; they may cook lunches for French classes; teachers may take on the role of classroom assistants or instructors. But they are still in charge and decide what and how students will learn. Every experience, no matter how simple it may seem at first, can contain an infinite amount of meaning by adding connections to things and other experiences in the

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<sup>25</sup> Lever and Gerber, "Pragmatism and Epistemic Democracy."

<sup>26</sup> J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (Project Gutenberg, 2020 [1916]).

mind. One of the simplest and most effective ways to add meaning to an experience is through regular communication with others, that is, contact in which both parties share a common interest or concern that gets each party excited about an activity. Excitement in action creates a feeling of excitement in learners and effectively replaces one-way communication in which while one party speaks another listens and follows instructions. In education, geography and history are two disciplines that lend themselves very well to expanding the meaning of direct personal experience. Geography does this by explaining the relationship between experience and nature, and history does this by explaining the relationship with people. Both, however, relate to the same life as a whole, because human social life is always closely connected to nature.<sup>27</sup>

Democracy in education is expressed in the content of education when delivering knowledge to learners. Therefore, capabilities should be understood here as meanings that make up the content of the social life taking place, many of which are derived from the experiences of previous generations. Knowledge rapidly increases in scope and meaning according to the development of the complexity of social life. That is why knowledge must be selected, shaped and reorganized so that it can be passed on to the next generation. However, this process tends to make knowledge something valuable in itself, rather than a tool to help students realize the hidden meanings of social life and solve problems. To avoid this, learners need to start with real activities with social origins and applications, and then with a scientific understanding of the relevant things and laws by incorporating into their experience the ideas and knowledge of those who are more competent. The teacher, on the other hand, tends to think that his job is to make the learner acquire

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<sup>27</sup> C. Subramaniam, "Play and Education: Some Points to Ponder," *Learning Curve* 10 (2021): 3–7.

such knowledge and respond to it with predefined words, without paying attention to the level of social acceptance and connection of this knowledge to the learner's intelligence.<sup>28</sup>

Vietnamese education faces limitations such as outdated content and curriculum, many places of education pay attention to quantity more than quality, resulting in program overload. Therefore, fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education must lead to the following goal: to educate Vietnamese people so that each individual comprehensively develop and promote their best potential and creativity; love family, country and people; live well and work effectively.<sup>29</sup>

The educational idea of pragmatism seems to be suitable to renew Vietnam's educational program by promoting students' capabilities. Classifying education according to age and region brings a content for students that helps them master different kinds of knowledge, different kinds of skills, and enter into natural and social relationships in different fields of life. In this way, students are self-confident and independent, work more creatively and efficiently, and have more knowledge and life skills to live better. The abilities and qualities of citizens required in a modern, civilized and democratic society are skills for every person and citizen to live and work according to the Constitution and the law. Education is the development of learners' operational capabilities. Along with democratic values, attitudes and skills, they must be taught, learned, practiced in schools, educational and training institutions.

Democracy in education in the sphere of education management in Vietnam must be realized through organization, research and evalua-

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<sup>28</sup> L. J. Waks, "John Dewey's Philosophy of Democratic Education," in *A History of Western Philosophy of Education in the Modern Era* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 25–52.

<sup>29</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, *Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW: "Transforming a new and comprehensive version of education and training, responding to public requests modernization in the context of the market economy"* (Hanoi 2013).

tion. Schools and teachers participate in students' educational activities together with organizations, families and communities. In this way, students are free, autonomous and can comprehensively promote their creative abilities to develop. Democracy in education is that students can educate themselves to live according to their conditions, needs and abilities; they can learn to be human, to work, to have, to live together. This is the value of democracy in educating and training future citizens for the country.

Current educational innovations in Vietnam should aim to develop students' competencies and qualities. Examinations and assessments must be first of all a comprehensive assessment of students' competencies, not just an assessment of students' ability to memorize knowledge. Reviewing, testing and evaluating educational results gradually follow advanced criteria trusted and recognized by the global society and educational community. These criteria include: coordinating assessment during the educational process with final and summative assessments of the school year; coordinating teacher assessment with student self-assessment; coordinating school assessment with assessments by families and society; making periodic assessments of the quality of educational institutions, educational programs and in-service training; and making accreditation results public.

Democracy in education means autonomy in school management, social responsibility and commitment to the quality of education, proper implementation of legal mechanisms and equality in education; schools must use information technology in education. Democracy in education proactively prevents negative developments in education by boldly dismissing low-quality teachers and outdated managers. Democracy in education is transparent in testing and evaluating students' abilities.

*Educational Methods Following Specific Conditions of  
Society and Level of Awareness of Learners*

The efficiency argument about benefits is deeply rooted in the concept of truth. Each practical person explains their method in different ways. However, their basic views are the same and boil down to finding efficiency in what is less labor intensive, less time consuming, and what pragmatists call a cost saving method.

Peirce's educational approach is a guiding principle and correct way of thinking that helps us "make our ideas clear."<sup>30</sup> Peirce is a mathematician who reduces our actions to our basic beliefs or hypotheses. By experiencing new things and creating new ideas based on our knowledge, we can improve our thinking and action.<sup>31</sup> This is a complicated process, but in essence, as Peirce argues, pragmatism is about reality. It values ideas that are rational and usable in real (*i.e.*, practical) life. It is not interested in abstract concepts, but only in things that are relevant and valuable to human life.<sup>32</sup>

Pragmatism holds that education is not about teaching a student what he should know, but about encouraging them to learn through experimentation and creativity. Education through learning and doing makes a person creative, self-confident and cooperative. These methods of learning by doing are the goal of education. The student is given a set of notes to solve problems and develop his knowledge relevant to his life now and in the future.<sup>33</sup> Dewey believes that people learn through a "realistic" approach and experience of reality. This means

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<sup>30</sup> D. Özden, "Does the Pragmatist Theory of Truth 'Work'?", *Aporia* 31, no. 1 (2021): 63–72.

<sup>31</sup> C. S. Peirce, *Charles S. Peirce, Selected Writings* (Courier Corporation, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> D. G. Campos, "Peirce's Philosophy of Mathematical Education: Fostering Reasoning Abilities for Mathematical Inquiry," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29, no. 5 (2010): 421–439.

<sup>33</sup> T. Fadel, *Use What We Have: Ways to Contextualize and Improvise in the Classroom* (M.A. Thesis, Western Oregon University, 2021).

that pragmatism encourages students to interact with their environment in order to adapt and learn. The continuity principle asserts that people's experiences in the past will influence their future. In contrast, the emphasis on interaction assumes that exchanging experiences with the present situation will create new experiences, experiences in the present.

According to Dewey, education is an activity, not a preparation for future life. Dewey's theory is that the teacher cannot be concerned with the learner's past experiences and that these experiences need not be negative or positive for the learning process. The teacher cannot control the learners' past, but he can arrange the appropriate learning context to give students a present experience through the interaction between the learning context and their experience.

Like all human knowledge, any specific subject is a product of human efforts to solve problems encountered in practice. However, treating this subject as a standard subject of expertise separates and abstracts it from complex situations. Traditional educators argue that it is possible to impose this knowledge through successive steps based on the logic of this abstracted subject. However, such a presentation is less interesting to the subject.<sup>34</sup> Dewey set the teacher the challenging task of "bringing the subject matter of the curriculum into practical experience."

Moreover, it does not allow students to discover knowledge on their own through activities that require them to apply specific knowledge. According to this model, students are given a way to do something rather than directly discovering it. As a result, teachers must rely on other things, such as fear of pain or insult, and knowledge transfer is challenged by imposing knowledge on students or allowing them to

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<sup>34</sup> J. Dewey, *Experience and Education: In the Educational Forum* (Taylor & Francis Group, 1986).

deal with abstract knowledge on their own. Dewey thus calls on teachers to a “psychology” of the curriculum. It is necessary to create an operational environment with challenging situations to apply their knowledge and skills, experience and culture when dealing with science, history and art in the learning process. Knowledge at its most basic level is the understanding of directly performing certain activities. Therefore, one of the most effective educational methods is to use simple activities that capture students’ interest and simulate relatively accurate social actions. Students will then acquire skills and information about materials, tools, and rules to engage in these activities because of their appeal, not to learn. The fact that these activities stimulate social life also facilitates the transfer of the school content to out-of-school situations. In this way, they serve an educational purpose. This principle eliminates the practice of imitating or reproducing patterns without the freedom to change and make informed judgments, while also eliminating the use of materials that are too perfectly processed instead of raw, as in the real environment. In addition, activities must include opportunities for learners to make mistakes and some level of challenge. The teacher is there to help and make the learner aware of their mistakes and weaknesses. Creating and maintaining a creative and constructive attitude in these activities is more important than perfection.<sup>35</sup>

In Vietnam, education faces limitations in educational methods. Teachers mainly teach more theory than practice, which causes students to be limited in practical skills and creative thinking. Therefore, the innovation in education strives to renew the educational method. Teachers must use such techniques to require students to discover the truth for themselves. Through educational methods, students’ experiential activities should be planned to arouse their curiosity in acquiring knowl-

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<sup>35</sup> M. K. Williams, “John Dewey in the 21st Century,” *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education* 9, no. 1 (2017): 91–102.

edge. In pragmatist education, the position of teachers is secondary in the teaching-learning process. The teacher suggests a problem, points out solution lines, and then lets the student experiment on his own. The student realizes the idea of self-education.

Therefore, the pragmatist philosophy of education is the basis for Vietnamese education to innovate teaching methods and teach teachers to be autonomous in teaching activities based on creativity and interest. The teaching method teaches students to do rather than to know, to discover independently rather than to gather dry information. The process of arousing the students' "interest" is the teachers' task. Student interest is the keynote of pragmatist education. Democracy in education establishes a new way of looking at communication and equality between teachers and students. Equality here means an equitable, positive exchange of ideas. Equality is understood as the student's right to ask questions, the right to acquire new information, the right to participate in solving tasks. It is necessary to eliminate teaching according to the old method: teachers read and students take notes. Since teaching is an interactive process between teachers and students, teachers must lead students to discover new knowledge that they do not know. This method of education develops the habit of independent and creative thinking; at the same time, students will develop life skills and moral qualities by following social norms. Student-centered education methods are based on the principle of suggesting and guiding students rather than imparting knowledge to them. The perspective of learner-centered teaching does not diminish the role of the teacher; on the contrary, it requires the teacher to be much more qualified in professional qualities and competencies. The learner is the focus of the educational process, not the teacher as before. Education is to help learners have interest, passion for learning, be active in learning activities and be able to learn how to acquire new knowledge.

## Conclusion

In short, the educational ideas of pragmatism aim to help students learn how to live and adapt to real life. Democracy in education stems from the effort to discover and present the concepts associated with a democratic society and apply them to the problems of educational activity. Pragmatism holds that an educational program must promote democracy and be related to the learner's experience, nurture the learner's imagination, curiosity, and creativity, and express the learner's ideas.

The pragmatist idea of democracy in education had a fundamental impact not only on American education but also on modern education in the 20th century. The pragmatist philosophy of education is about equipping learners with useful knowledge and helping learners acquire practical skills that they can develop and use in their lives. The pragmatist philosophy of education is aimed to promote each student's strengths and teach them in the context of their individual characteristics. Using the experience of pragmatist philosophy of education, Vietnamese education aims to implement fundamental and comprehensive educational innovations to meet human demands globally. And this article is an expression of that.



### **Pragmatist Idea of Democracy in Education and Its Meaning for Educational Innovation in Vietnam Today**

#### SUMMARY

This paper uses the philosophical methods employed by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey to formulate pragmatism's basic ideas about education. The ideas proposed by the pragmatists are also used to compare and define their relationship between each other in order to create a new philosophy (theory) of democratic

education. Based on the assumptions of pragmatism to show democracy in education, the paper explains the application of pragmatism to educational reform in Vietnam today. For pragmatism is to be what unites education.

#### KEYWORDS

Vietnam, democracy, education, philosophy, pragmatism.

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