

IDEALISM AND EDUCATION

The word "Idealism" has been derived from 'Ideal'. Plato conceived of ideas as the basis of his philosophy. Idealism is a philosophical position which adheres to the view that nothing exists except an idea in the mind of man. Idea or higher nature is essences. They are of ultimate cosmic significance. Idealism idolizes 'mind and self'. An idealist shifts the emphasis from the natural or scientific facts of life to the spiritual aspects of human experiences.

Philosophical meaning : - Idealism seeks to offer an explanation of the man and the universe in terms of spirit or mind. Idealism is in fact spiritualism. Man's spiritual nature is considered to be the very essence of his being. It asserts that reality is to be found in man's mind rather than in material nature.

CHIEF ASSERTIONS OF IDEALISM : -

- **Spirit and mind constitute reality :** - Idealism believes that the spiritual nature of man is the essence of his being. The mental or spiritual is more real and important than material.
- **Man being spiritual is a supreme creation :** - According to idealism the supreme aim of life is exaltation of human personality. Man is a spiritual being and it distinguishes him from other animals. Reality is found in the mind of man and in the external world.
- **Universal mind :** - Idealism believes in universal mind. The little mind is a part of it. The goal of human life is to realize the universal mind.
- **Faith in spiritual values :** - Values are absolute and unchanging. The prime aim of human life is to achieve spiritual values. These are truth, beauty and goodness. In the pursuit of these values man rises higher and higher in the moral plan till he attains divinity.
- **Real knowledge is perceived in mind :** - God is the source of all knowledge, knowledge acquired through the activity, creativity and exercise of mind is important than the knowledge acquired through senses.

AIMS OF EDUCATION : -

- **Self - realization or exaltation of human personality.** According to idealism, man is the most beautiful creature of God his grandest work. It lays stress on the exaltation of human personality. It is self - realization. The aim of education is to develop the self of the individual's higher till self - realization is achieved.
- **Universal education.** Education should be universal in nature. Education should be based on the teaching of universal truth from the stand point of rationality of the universe.



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- **Spiritual development.** Idealists give greater importance to spiritual values in comparison with material attainments. According to Rusk, "Education must enable mankind through its culture to enter more and more fully into the spiritual realm, and also enlarge the boundaries of spiritual realm".
- **Transmission & promotion of cultural heritage.** Education must contribute to the development of culture, enlarging the boundaries of spiritual realm. The child has to be introduced to his cultural heritage so as to enable him to conserve, promote and transmit it to the rising generation.
- **Cultivation of moral values.** According to idealism, man is a moral being. The process of education must lead to the deepest spiritual insight and to the highest moral and spiritual conduct.
- **Development of intelligence and rationality.** There are set principles working in this creation. An idealist always tries to discover and understand these principles so that on the basis of moral elements the world remains organized. Hence, education is to develop the intelligence and rationality of the child.

In short the idealists believe that education must help in the full evolution of mind, the emancipation of spirit, self - realization and the realization of higher values of life and to train "the whole man completely and fully for manhood and not some part of man".

CURRICULUM : -

While developing curriculum, idealist give more importance to thought, feelings, ideals and values than to the child and his activities. They hold that curriculum should be concerned with the whole humanity and experiences. Human activities may be classified as :

1. Intellectual.
2. Aesthetics.
3. Moral.
4. Physical.

Great importance is given to humanities, culture, art, history, philosophy, literature and religion.

Idealism does not ignore physical activities for with health and fitness the pursuit of spiritual values is seriously hampered.

Ross has beautifully synthesized physical and spiritual activities in the following way :

METHODS OF TEACHING : -

Idealism has not prescribed specific method of teaching. According to idealism classroom is a temple of spiritual learning, a meeting place of human minds is a place for self - education. For this no particular method has been suggested. However, the following methods have been advocated by different idealists : -

1. Learning through reading.
2. Learning through lecturing.
3. Learning through discussion.
4. Learning through imitation.
5. Learning through questioning.
6. Descartes employed the device of simple to complex. Herbert advocated Instruction Method while as Froebel insisted upon play - way Method. In all, Socrates Method and Discussion Method form the basis of idealism.

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Idealism and teacher :- Education according to the idealist pattern is ideal - centered, not wholly child - centered, or subject - centered. Idealistic pattern of education grants the highest place to the educator. The teacher creates a specific environment for the educand's development.

Role of teacher : -

1. The teacher personifies reality for the pupil. The pupil understands and learns about the universe through his teacher.
2. The teacher has to be a specialist in the knowledge of each one of his pupils.
3. A good teacher commands the respect of the pupils by virtue of his own high standards of behavior and conduct.
4. The teacher should be a personal friend of the individual.
5. He provides standards of imitation.

Idealism and Discipline. Idealist attaches importance to impressionistic discipline in comparison with repressionistic discipline. They assert that the teacher should first gain respect from the child by his affectionate and sympathetic behavior and then motivate him to learn by his praiseworthy ideals. He has to sublimate his basic instincts. He has to maintain such environment so as to control his undesirable activities and develop desirable qualities of head and heart in such a way that he begins to exercise and maintain self - discipline. The student should realize that this self - discipline is for his own good and development.

Conclusion : - Idealism has made a significant contribution to education thought. It has given higher place to mental and spiritual than to physical world. It stresses religious education for character training. Idealistic philosophy provides clear and direct guidelines for the aims in education, curricula, teacher's role and method of teaching.

