UNIT 15: FROEBEL AND HIS EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Froebel's Philosophy of Education

15.4 Froebel's Theory and Principles of Education

15.5 Educational Methods Underlying Froebel's Kindergarten System

15.6 Concept of Gifts and Occupations by Froebel

15.6.1 Educational Implications of Gifts and Occupations

15.7 Froebel's Contribution to Modern Education

15.8 Let us Sum up

15.9 Further Reading

15.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.11 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain Froebel's philosophy of education
- discuss Froebel's principles of education
- examine the methods of Froebel's Kindergarten system of education
- analyze the concept of gifts and occupations given by Froebel
- assess the contribution of Froebel to modern education

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Froebel's philosophy and principles of education. After going through this unit, you will also be able to understand the method of Froebel's Kindergarten system which is a very significant method at present. Apart from this, the unit will enable you to analyze the concepts of gifts and occupations put forward by Froebel in the early years. The last part of the unit is a reflection on the contribution of Froebel to modern education.

self development. He had described child development with that of the development of a tree; and his internal physical, mental and spiritual development follow the nature course of development like that of a tree. He also maintained that this development is endless and eternal leading us from better to the best.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Who was Froebel?

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Q2: What are the two important aspects of Froebel's Educational Philosophy?

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LET US KNOW

Froebel was the author of many books. They are-

a) *Autobiography*
b) *Education of Development*
c) *The Education of Man.*
d) *Mother Play.*
e) *Pedagogies of Kindergarten*

15.4 FROEBEL'S THEORY AND PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

Among all the educationists, Froebel was the only one who was greatly influenced by philosophical ideals. His educational philosophy was tempered by the philosophy of idealism. The educational principles underlying the philosophy of Froebel are discussed below-

Development of the inner self

Froebel was of the view that education is nothing but the growth from within. The main aim of education is the development of the inner self of a man. He said that development of inner self is not an act of imposition on the child

Nature Study

We all know that there is an intimate relation between man and nature. Man is nothing but a part of Nature. Froebel maintains that nature study helps the child to realize the existence and beauty of God. So, in his education system study of nature and its beauty has formed an essential part.

Moral and religious education

Froebel's education system is tempered by a sense of moral and spiritual values. He maintained that religious education only can develop insight in the mind of the child about God and man. It helps a child to realize that our soul and mind are nothing but the outcome of God. He maintained that the relationship between man and man, parents and children, teachers and students are nothing but the outcome of religious sentiments. So, he strongly opined that the child should be encouraged to develop religious sentiments even in the family life.

Child's creativity

Child is by nature creative. Froebel was of the view that God himself is a good creator. So, men should also try to follow His example and utilize His creative ability. He maintained that every man's mind and soul finds expression through such creative activity.

Sense training

Froebel has given priority to training of the senses of children for their education. He believed that a child's mental life develops only through the visual and auditory senses. Froebel in his Kindergarten system had emphasized the training of these senses through the play materials. He gave the concept of "gifts and occupations" that may help in the training of the senses in children. These gifts are the play things systematically arranged and designed by him for children.

Symbolism

The use of symbol in education is a novel creation of Froebel's education system. He believed that a child's acquisition of knowledge and experience is based on use of symbol. He explained his view with a very significant example; such as, a ball used by a child in play symbolizes the unity of the universe. Another example put forward by him was that the ring drawn on

unrestricted. This school made a child's spontaneous development of innate nature possible. A child can have freedom of movement by means of singing, dancing and through play activities. Here, a child may use his body organs unrestrictedly by handling 'gifts and occupations'. There is no fixed curriculum under this system of education. The main objective behind this system of education was to help a child develop his native and natural tendencies spontaneously through play.

Method of education

The main objective of this system of education was to help the child in making effective self-expression through self-activity. Child's self expression may be possible in three different ways such as- songs, gestures and construction. These are the three natural ways and means by which a child can express his thought and feeling. Thus, Froebel had made effective provision for self-expression of the child in his system. There is co-relation between singing and muscular movement of the body which results in creative self-expression of the child.

Curriculum

In Kindergarten system, there is no fixed curriculum. Play is the only means through which the child can acquire necessary education at this stage. The subjects taught to children are physical study of nature, moral and religious education, dancing, drawing, language study, social study, natural science, art and mathematics. Froebel emphasized on the study of mathematics for he believed that mathematics can develop spiritual power in an individual and help him/her realize the principle of divine unity. These subjects were introduced considering child's psychology, physical needs and possibilities of their development. The process of learning under this system was practical rather than theoretical.

Training through songs

In Froebel's education system, songs constitute an essential element of teaching. The various songs used by him for the purpose of teaching include "mother's play" and "nursery songs". He considered these songs as the most effective means in training the child and his feeling and emotion. It may also helps the child to exercise his/her senses, limbs and muscles appropriately. The use of songs may help in realizing the physical, mental,

Kindergarten system has, therefore, been successful in giving us a workable method of child's education based on scientific standpoint. This system was able to draw attention from all over the world.

LET US KNOW



Frobel's philosophy of education is based on four major principles: free self expression, creativity, social participation and motor expression. He began to focus on the needs of children just prior to entering school. Froebel envisioned a place where 4 to 6 year old children would be nurtured and protected from outside influences.

15.6 CONCEPT OF GIFTS AND OCCUPATIONS BY FROEBEL

Froebel has made an original contribution in the field of child learning by designing gifts and occupations in his Kindergarten system of education. Objects like balls, blocks of woods of different shape, size, colour were named as "gifts" by Froebel because to him they are the most appropriate gifts to serve the needs of children. He also maintained the view that they are called the divine gifts presented by God to the little children. These gifts are carefully graded and are presented to children in order of their intellectual standard. The activities connected with these gifts is named as "occupations". The purpose of these gifts is to train the child's sense of touch and sight and to give him an idea of shape, size, surface, colour, number and quality. By handling the gifts, the child may develop his/her motor skill and motor abilities and derive occupational training. Along with them, he included some of the craftwork such as paper folding, paper cutting, clay modeling, basket making, knitting, embroidery and gardening.

15.6.1 Educational Implications of Gifts and Occupations

Gifts and occupations introduced by Froebel in the Kindergarten system of education have several educational implications. We can analyse those implications as follows:

till today. It has been found by many researchers that Kindergarten system is the best method of education at present all over the world. The educational principles of Froebel had virtually inspired the educational thinkers of the present century in promoting child's education. In this regard, our attention may be drawn to the following achievements of Froebel-

Workable method of child's education

Froebel was the first to give a workable method of child's learning and development. The Kindergarten system introduced by Froebel gave a new concept and a new direction which has remained an inspiring source to people of all times.

Concept of play

Froebel was the first to make effective use of play as a means of child's education. He emphasized that a child's spontaneous development of self-expression is possible only through play. Play gives a child joy of freedom, opportunity for physical and mental development. These ideals of Froebel on children's play have brought about a revolutionary change in modern education.

Gifts and occupations

Use of gifts and occupations for self activity and self-learning of the child is a unique example of the creative talent used by Froebel. Educative use of the gifts and occupations has given a new meaning and a new realization for making education activity-oriented. Principle of child's learning by doing has been given a scientific basis through these gifts.

Rhythmic expression

Froebel had deeply realized the true spontaneous and rhythmic nature of the child. Accordingly, he made necessary provision for self expression and development of the child by the use of singing, dancing, and music. It is an inspiring source to understand the true nature and necessity of the child's mind.

Sense training

Froebel was the first to give the world a scientific and workable method of sense training through play apparatus. He designed the play things keeping in view their gradual complexity for mental training. His scientific concept of



15.8 LET US SUM UP

- Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel was born in Oberweissbach, Thuringia on 21 April 1782. He was a German pedagogue and a student of Pestalozzi who laid the foundation of modern education based on the recognition that children have unique needs and capabilities.
- His philosophy of education is known as absolute idealism.
- Froebel's educational philosophy is based on two important aspects. They are- Law of unity in diversity and theory of development.
- Froebel maintained that God is that inseparable absolute power that guides and directs all substance on earth which we call it as the "law of divine unity". On the basis of this law, Froebel has formulated the principle that there is unity of man, nature and God.
- Froebel was of the view that a child's education should be based on this inner spontaneous self development. He had compared a child's development with that of the development of a tree and his internal, physical, mental and spiritual development follow the natural course of development like that of a tree.
- Some of the significant characteristics of the educational principles underlying the philosophy of Froebel are- development of the inner-self, education through play, principle of self activity, freedom in education, social education, nature study, moral and religious education, child's creativity, sense training and symbolism.
- The word "Kindergarten" is of German origin which means "garden of children". He compared school with a beautiful garden where little children were compared to the tender plants. The teachers who took care of them were compared to the gardener.
- The main objective behind the Kindergarten system of education is to help a child to develop his native and natural tendencies spontaneously

4) Safaya,R. and Shaida, B.D.(2003):*Modern Theory and Principles of Education*, Dhanpat Co. New Delhi.

15.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel was a German pedagogue and a student of Pestalozzi who laid the foundation of modern education based on the recognition that children have unique needs and capabilities.

Ans to Q No 2: Froebel's educational philosophy is based on two important aspects. They were- Law of unity in diversity and theory of development.

Ans to Q No 3: (a) Philosophy of idealism.

(b) Absolute idealism.

Ans to Q No 4: Froebel was of the view that there is an intimate relation between freedom and self-development of the child. A child cannot make natural development unless he is free from all influences. Freedom provides the child an ideal condition for self-expression and self-realisation. So, no restriction should be provided on the free activity of the child.

Ans to Q No 5: Objects like balls, blocks of woods of different shape, size, colour are named as "gifts" by Froebel because to him, they are the most appropriate gifts to serve the needs of children.

Ans to Q No 6: The activities connected with these gifts were named as "occupations".

15.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)

Q1: What is law of unity in diversity?

Q2: What is theory of development?

Q3: What is the meaning of the word 'Kindergarten'?



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