UNIT 8: IDEALISM AS A SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Meaning of Philosophy.

8.3.1 Aspects of Education based on Philosophy

8.3.2 Relation between Philosophy and Education.

8.4 Idealism and its Educational Principles

8.4.1 Idealism and its Influences on Educational Thought and Practice.

8.5 Let Us Sum Up

8.6 Further Readings

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.8 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- define the meaning and concept of philosophy and its relation with education
- analyse the principles underlying the philosophy of idealism
- explain the philosophy of idealism and its influence in different aspects education

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Idealism as an important school of philosophy which have contributed greatly towards educational theory and practice. Education in its widest sense is co-existent with human life. It is running parallel to human society, civilization and culture. Education always seeks to integrate itself with constantly changing and evolving life styles.

experiences and background of the person, who expresses them. We know that every activity in our life—social, intellectual, spiritual is based upon our beliefs, values and ideals. These beliefs, in fact, mould and direct our activities. Thus, philosophy is considered to be that field of knowledge which only can provide an adequate direction for the most ideal conduct of life.

Philosophy, in its broader meaning, views life in its totality and assumes an all comprehensive character. It makes philosophy the source of all knowledge about life as its true interpreter. Cicero defines philosophy as the 'mother of all arts'.



Synthesis: combining things into a connected whole

Thus, we can look upon philosophy as the '**synthesizer** of all knowledge'. Philosophy is an attempt to answer all the questions of life. In other words, philosophy enables man to understand himself and the universe of which he is a part. Philosophy gives meaning to human experience and, thus, it is a way of life.

8.3.1 Aspects of Education based on Philosophy

At present, all the aspects of education or areas of its studies are tempered by and determined through application of the philosophical principles. An outline of them may be presented below-

- It is philosophy which serves as a guide to modern man for determination of an appropriate aim of education.
- Philosophy can help to determine the desirable elements of our past cultural heritage and can be transmitted to our young generations in school through proper curriculum. Thus, curriculum construction essentially depends upon philosophy.
- Emergence of an appropriate workable method and scientific method of teaching involves the use of philosophical ideals. All the new methods of child learning, we have at present are based on philosophy of education.
- Maintenance of the principle and standard of discipline in school involves application of a sound philosophy of education. Philosophical insight may help the teacher in evolving his own workable method and standard of discipline.

- **Education is the best means of propagation of philosophy:** Every philosopher develops his own set of aims, ideals and values. He then lives in accordance with those aims, ideals and values. He also wants others to be converted to his beliefs and live in accordance with them. This he can achieve through education, which is the best means of propagation of his philosophy. Thus, philosophy sets the goal of life and education provides the means for its achievement. Ross has correctly summed up this point when he says "philosophy and education are two sides of the same coin, the former is the contemplative while the latter is the active side".
- **Great philosophers have also been great educators:** All great educators are philosophers and the system of education conceived by them bear the distinct imprint of their philosophical outlooks. It is well known to you that philosophical thoughts of Gandhiji and Rabindra Nath Tagore have been reflected in their scheme of Basic education and Shantiniketan system of education respectively. Great philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Spencer were also great educators. For example, John Dewey is known not only for his philosophical theories but also for his educational ideas. Therefore, **Fichte** said "The art of education is incomplete without the help of philosophy". Thus, the relationship between education and philosophy is necessary; the one is incomplete and useless without the other.



Fichte: (1762-1814)
German Idealist Philosopher

- **Philosophy determines all broad aspects of education:** Philosophy appears to be important in each field of education. It is philosophy that provides the aims of education and the aims determine the curriculum, method of teaching, the problems of school organization and school discipline. It also determines the role of teacher in the educational process. Thus, philosophy is the background of education. It has been rightly said that without philosophy, education would be a blind effort and without education, philosophy is incomplete and invalid.

- The knowledge of the ultimate truth is the real knowledge. This knowledge is logical; it is the consequence of contemplation and insight. It is not the subject of sense organs.
- Idealists believe in the fullest development of personality of an individual. According to idealists, development of personality means achievement of perfection.

8.4.1 Idealism and its influence on educational thought and practice

Idealism in Education:

Let us discuss how the idealist school of philosophy influenced different aspects of education. Idealistic schools in education are represented by Plato, Comenious, Kant, Pestalozzi, Hegel, Froebel, Tagore and Gandhi. All these idealist thinkers believe that man is born with a spiritual self and he can realize his spirituality and understand its true nature only through education. Now, we shall discuss the aims of education, curriculum, method of teaching, role of teacher and the concept of discipline according to idealism.

Idealism and Aims of Education:

As we have already stated, the idealists believe that man is a spiritual being and is the best creation of God. Their aims of education are also based on this assumption:

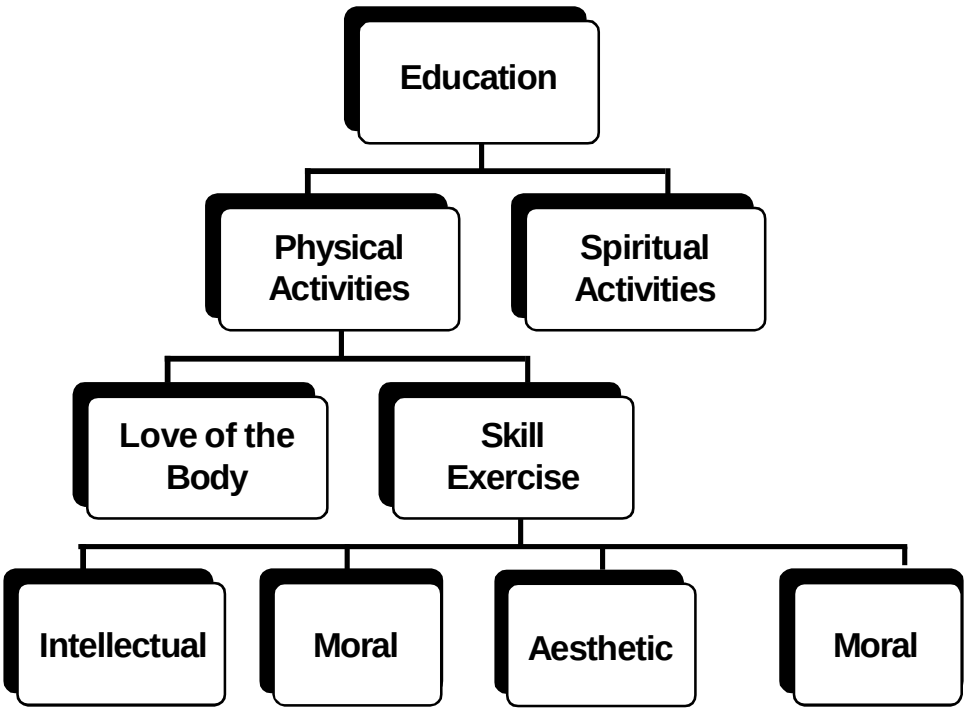
- **Exaltation of human personality:** Human personality is of the greatest worth and education should strive for enrichment and exaltation of personality. The **exaltation** of personality is based on the concept of realization of the highest potentialities of the self in a social and cultural environment. Hence, idealism advocates spiritual and cultural aim of education through which values are secured and complete self realization is made possible.
- **Universal Education:** Self realization, as stated above should not be confined to a few individuals only. In an idealistic society, education of children should be universal without any distinction of caste, creed, colour or social status.



Exaltation: action of raising

Fig.1

Idealistic Scheme of Education can be shown in the following way:



Idealism and Methods of Teaching:

After getting knowledge on the curriculum of this philosophy, we should also have the ideas of how to transact the curriculum? Regarding the methods of teaching, idealists lays stress on the following methods.

- Questioning and discussion methods should be adopted by the teacher. He must ask for thought provoking question so that the content studied may have meaning and significance for the pupils.
- Idealists also support lecture method, but it is limited to the presentation of accurate facts and objective information only.
- Two outstanding idealist thinkers- Pestalozzi and Froebel advocate self activities on the part of children for gaining knowledge. The children must learn through doing. Instruction should be active by giving importance on creative activity and experience. Idealists believe that creative activity leads to self expression and self realization of the highest potentialities of the child.

Evaluation of Idealism:

As a philosophy of education, idealism has made significant contribution to the modern educational thought and practice. We must appreciate this philosophy of education for the following merits or reasons.

- Idealism gives importance to the development of 'mind' 'spirit' and 'soul' and the aim of education as perfection of the individual.
- According to idealists, knowledge of the ultimate truth is the real knowledge which in divine and leads to the freedom of mind.
- Idealism lays stress on self- realization.
- Idealism emphasizes complete development of human personality.
- Idealism holds that every human being must receive a chance to be educated and the goal of idealist in universal education.
- Education, according to idealist pattern, is ideal centered. Hence, it gives an important position to the teacher in the educative process.
- Idealistic philosophy provides clear guideline for the aims of education, curricula, teacher's role and method of teaching.

Idealism is, however, criticised by various critics.The drawbacks are enumerated below:

- Idealism is considered as an out dated philosophy. In today's scientific world, giving importance to spiritual universe is not considered to be in consonance with the scientific research.
- Idealistic concepts like 'spirit', 'mind', 'soul' have little relevance in class room teaching.
- It does not contribute much to the field of methods of teaching.
- Too much importance has been given to the teacher in the educative process which may lead to over dependence of the child on teacher.
- It gives over emphasis on humanities and under-rates the study of science and technology.
- Idealistic scheme of education, by and large, pays less attention to physical, industrial, social and electronic environment of today.

- Idealistic philosophy provides clear guidelines for the aims of education, curricula, teacher's role and methods of teaching.



8.6 FURTHER READING

1) Aggarwal, J.C. (2006) *Theory and principles of education*, Vikash publishing house, New Delhi.

2) Bhatia, K.K. (2004) *Principles and Theories of education*, Kalyani publishers, Ludhiana.

3) Chaube, S.P. and Chaube, A (1997) *philosophical and sociological foundations of education*, Binod Pustak Mandir, Agra.

4) Safaya, R and Shaida, B.D. (2003) *Modern theory and principles of education*, Dhanpat Rai, Publishing Company, New Delhi

5) Taneja, V.R. (1976) *Educational thought and practice*. Sterling publishers Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi.



8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1 : The word philosophy is derived from two Greek words 'philos' means 'love of' and 'Sophia' means 'Wisdom'. So derivative meaning of philosophy is 'love of wisdom'.

Ans to Q No 2 : 'Darshan' is a Sanskrit word, widely used in almost all Indian languages. It means philosophy. Indian concept of philosophy is expressed as Darshan.

Ans to Q No 3 : Education and philosophy are closely related to each other. This is revealed by the following points:

- Philosophy points out the way to be followed by education, i.e., philosophy determines the theory of education and education is the practical activity of philosophical thought
- Education is the best means of propagation of philosophy.
- Great philosophers are great educators.
- Philosophy determines all broad aspects of education like aims, curriculum, methods of teaching etc