

John Dewey and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): What Would He Say?

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ABSTRACT: Using John Dewey's writings and hypothetical thinking, this paper presents a critical review of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* and its implication for reform. It begins with Dewey's early work and includes his greatest success at Arthurdale WV in the 1930's. The importance of constructivist thinking is juxtaposition among the reformist views of today's assessment driven policy to qualify for funding. Like Dewey, the author argues for experiential learning to make connections in real life situations presented through school opportunities. In trying to highlight transparency, closing failing schools, bringing equanimity, raising standards, and improving curriculum, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* produced a culture of assessment without its accompanying experiential component. Learning best occurs when the experience connects with other aspects, so transfer of the knowledge becomes easily retrievable.

RESUMÉ: à l'appui des écrits et des hypothèses de John Dewey, un examen critique sur la loi *Ne laissez aucun enfant de côté (NCLB)* et son implication en faveur de la réforme, est mené. Dès le début, les travaux de Dewey sont passés en revue dont les plus connus à Arthurdale WV dans les années trente. Le point essentiel du raisonnement constructiviste est la juxtaposition au sein des opinions réformistes d'analyses guidées par la politique d'aujourd'hui afin de bénéficier de fonds. De même que Dewey, l'auteur plaide en faveur de l'instruction qui repose sur l'expérience afin d'établir les liens avec des circonstances parfois présentes à l'école. A essayer de mettre en évidence la transparence, de fermer les écoles en situation d'échec, de susciter l'impartialité, d'élever

les normes et d'améliorer le programme, la loi *Ne laissez aucun enfant de côté (NCLB)* a élaboré une culture d'évaluation sans composante expérientielle. La compréhension se fait au mieux lorsque l'expérience est mise en rapport avec d'autres aspects ce qui permet de repérer plus facilement la connaissance transférée.

Let us assume John Dewey were alive and venerated in his later years reflecting on educational change. How would he view the events and arguments supporting the educational reform that created the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*? He believed in reforming education (Dewey & Dewey, 1915), but his thinking was antithesis for federal assessments holding U.S. school districts hostage to qualify for federal funds all for summative testing supported by *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*.

Learning how to take a test, an assessment supported by the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, markedly contrasts to learning based on experimental teaching (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). That is experimenting in the sciences, creating through the arts, hypothesizing, and predication. He argued "*Growing is not which is complete in odd moments; it is a continuous leading into the future*" (Dewey, 1966 p.65), so that education is a process and not a vignette of formatted knowledge. Dewey believed education becomes an unfolding of events layered in experiences supported by making the present experiences as rich and meaningful as possible (Dewey, 1938). *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the updated, *Race to the Top (RTTT)* force accountability through assessments. *Dewey took another sip of his cooling coffee, "The purpose of the experiment is not to devise a method by which the teacher can teach more to the child in the same length of time or even prepare him more pleasantly for his college course. It is rather to give the child an education*

which will make him a better, happier, more efficient human being..." (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p.58).

His coffee cold, he sighed at the newspaper's words on tiers stressing uniform graduation rates, mandated timelines, targets, disaggregating graduation rate data, extension of deadlines. This thing called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and restructuring. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) fails to address learning but teaches taking a test without developing process skills. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is a program of regressive policies dedicated to issues of socioeconomic realities without addressing the cause, a disproportion of resources between student populations. Dewey thought scaffolding would build on a skill set supplementing processes, leading to a foundation winnowing knowledge.

He knew the curriculum he selected produced active learning. Students experiment, vote, participate in orchestra, recite lines from Shakespeare, and do trigonometry. Observation, recollection, and aesthetic taste are deemed essential to learning (Dewey, 1916). Participants actively pursue courses of instruction facilitated by educators. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) does none of this.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) increased federal spending on education in an attempt to increase "proficiency" on state wide exams. Dewey believed in causality: "Observation is an outcome, a consequence of the interaction of sense organ, and subject matter" (Dewey, 1966 p.77). When students march through the episodes of life, the experiences unfold and become reconstructed similar to an accordion. It is a reconstruction and reorganization of the many experiences which create meaning (Dewey, 1938).

By understanding this process, the learner grasps the true meaning of causality. He wanted educators to build

communities. Isolation occurs with *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and *Race to the Top (RTTT)* by reducing the recognition of shared common interests (Dewey, 1938). *He remembers typing “learners are not one size fits all, but rather experience is an active transaction that coordinates doing and undergoing”* (Dewey, 1938). This realization of social aspect to education demonstrates the mutual interpretation leading to a democratic society. *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* dictate processes for obtaining a score for ranking student success on that specific assessment. There is no ranking for values, imagination, and creativity.

The playground was the place to get fresh air, learn team rules, play by the accepted etiquette, chase butterflies, and organize your thoughts (Dewey and Dewey, 1915). The playground provided exercise time at recess. *Play consists typically in an area devoid of trees and covered in sawdust and his sigh took the tenor of a long drawn out billows at one of Carnegie’s steel mills. This was so unlike his boyhood in the Vermont woods and paddling a canoe.* Dewey believed education involved the trying out of ideas. Recess was a process, a laboratory of activities. Children played and learned limitations, experimented on the monkey bars, chose teams, and skipped rope.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) separates and distills the student population so that a proficient *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* is achieved. It allegedly provides instruction which accommodates all students. The special needs population has to receive services and also satisfactory *Adequate Yearly Progress* scores for advancement (and continued federal funds). *Nothing is cited with regard to improved participation in democracy for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for those students.*

Dewey's educational beliefs in *Democracy and Education* present a methodology counter to the logic posited by the approach of intervention strategies of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. He suggests the 'essentials' of method, to include fostering of good habits in thinking while at school. "But apart from the fact that the acknowledgement is not so great as in practice as in theory, there is not adequate theoretical recognition that all which the school can or need do for pupils, so far as their *minds* are concerned (that is, leaving out certain specialized muscular abilities), is to develop their ability to think" (Dewey, 1916, p. 153). He adds, "The parceling out of instruction among various ends such as acquisition of skill (in reading, spelling, writing, drawing, reciting); acquiring information (in history and geography), and training of thinking is a measure of the *ineffective* way in which we accomplish all three" (Dewey, 1916, p. 152).

The single path to improvement in educational instruction consists on centering upon specific conditions making the course as exact as possible. This path makes it a method of intelligent learning and not reciprocal flipping of words and numbers. There is a method to thinking, a method of intelligent experience in the context of the events. Thinking can be cultivated and honed in isolation so that it can be retrieved for application and use.

In an ideal learning environment, actual materials, appliances, and opportunities for doing things should be provided, so the student manipulates tools in the setting and becomes engaged. Even with indifferent modes of instruction, children's inquiries become spontaneous with proposals often varied and insightful (Dewey, 1916). From the offering of a manipulative (e.g. making a bird feeder), a child gets drawn into a world of his invention learning from the interaction with nature, events, and others. They become a player on the stage and not a

member of the audience. This is how one learns to deal with difficulty and the unexpected.

He believed in providing an obstacle to facilitate learning: “A difficulty is an indispensable stimulus to thinking, but not all call out thinking” (Dewey, 1966 p.184). Some create perplexing discouragement. Then the path of instruction is one where encouragement and small incremental successes lead to modeling of productive challenges and beneficial thinking. These challenges stem from artful introduction of well enacted pedagogy.

There is a correlation of facts, data, thoughts, learning, and knowledge already acquired and assessable to manipulate as inferences, playful ‘chess pieces’ for creating. These actions define and locate the question. They stimulate an arousal of associations to induce a new way or interpretation. This inventiveness shows a new light that is different than before. The originality lay in the use of what was learned and already observed. *No Child Left Behind* allows for neither preparing a table of questions nor prefacing it for understanding. Many of the facts were known when Isaac Newton thought of the theory of gravitation but the creative insight was his and not the recitation of the known. This might occur when a child learns that by entwining one length of string over another and putting a loop in it will create a knot to tie and untie his shoe lace. Or later when he puts five pennies with another five pennies, he has a dime.

Shaking his head he grudgingly admitted, No Child Left Behind attempts to bring the horse to the water to drink; nonetheless, the effort is one using a shotgun to hunt for a butterfly. Most probably, dulling the connections, nature embellished for exploration in a child’s life. A child is only young for a short time and curious for a shorter time and educators should provide

every opportunity to make connections possible through perceptible conditions, especially play. Children experience joy of intellectual constructiveness, creativeness, when the learning experiences connect. The winnowing of ability occurs soon enough without the dictates of a contrived grouping.

Ideas or “humble guesses” can lead to theorizing by students of all ages. Through the connections created by mind play and drawing out of ideas, concepts become firmed, organized for acting upon and experimentation. They become a “guide and organize further observations, recollections, and experiments” (Dewey, 1916 p.189). Play and games become opportunities for reproducing situations in life for progressive mental and physical growth. This was foreseen when Dewey insightfully addressed a perspective in his writing:

But this state of affairs does not afford instructors an excuse for folding their hands and persisting in methods which segregate school knowledge. Every recitation in every subject gives an opportunity for establishing cross connection between matter of the lesson and wider and more direct experiences of life (Dewey, 1916 p. 191).

He thought the *least* desirable of educational pedagogy treats instruction without attempting to find the points of connectivity, such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* derived teaching emphasize. Though teachers are models and resources for others, their knowledge places them in a position of misuse with *No Child Left Behind* requirements. Much of their time becomes obligated to training for a test and precludes building steps and connectivity between ideas. The

students fail to grasp putting the connectivity with an idea in a multiple choice formatted test for *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* reporting. Without exercise and play, the situation is plaintively worse. This results in using school time for drill on test taking.

He believed the measure of the value of experience was in the perception of the relationships or continuities leading up to the founding of the learning (Dewey, 1916). This includes free play for the student mind to have a break from sitting. Present, neuroscience research has shown that physical activity enhances learning (Sejnowski, 1999). *He wrote in Democracy and Education about the importance of fostering good school habits of thinking.* Dewey addressed the knowledge of this habit by limitation of creating the ability in reality. This is done through the effort or attempted development of the ability, in the parceling out of the instruction, thereby producing a measured acquisition of learning. The world becomes a kaleidoscope of experiences connected with senses of purpose and usage. Through the problems initiated the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the responses for compliance have addressed little more than taking a test in reading to assuage passage of *Adequate Yearly Progress* to qualify for federal dollars. Then learning is sidetracked with the promotion of scores and not experience. In this kind of atmosphere, there is no fostering of being a good person or developing a community of shared ideas and values, nor development of experiential foundations. There is development of problem solving and collective sense of purpose.

He could see his breadth in late afternoon chill, dang this No Child Left Behind attempts to address education by assessment spurred by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), nothing in the No Child Left Behind 'protocol' fosters the thinking of students. Thinking requires

practice situations and examination of case studies to develop their ability to think. The primary method of instruction is a path for improvement in methods for teaching. This becomes an enduring legacy seen in years of transference from generation to generation. The reality is the student has to have something done to him and then do something in response.

The "material of thinking" is not mere thoughts but active participation tying facts and events together in a relative manner (Dewey, 1916). This involves actual material so the engagement of opportunities for connecting ideas is provided. Learning progresses when these opportunities present themselves to students. The students experience joy as the increments augment constructiveness of information. This is creativeness. Every recitation and educational activity provides an opportunity for establishing cross connections between a lesson's material and experience of everyday life, but there needs to be scheduled time to harbor these connections. Students miss genuine experience of a situational response and activity. There needs to be a link made to thought. In different areas of science, linking ideas has lead to inquiry and discovery. Louis Pasteur said: "Chance favors the prepared mind." Developing a train of thinking begins with associating observations with thinking. This is how suggested solutions occur while following the continuity or flow of linking thought and action. The validity of the observation comes when there is an opportunity for testing the application. Preparation begins long before the opportunity presents itself and conclusions leading to discoveries are made (Dewey, 1916).

Learning about cause and effect exemplifies the pragmatic nature of learning. Dewey realized, "Method is not antithetical to subject matter; it is the direction of

subject matter to desired results" (Dewey, 1966 p.172). He believed in a criterion of development of a good society which espoused the preceding arguments that grew from practical applications as has been mentioned in the aforementioned. Learning is a constant process of constructing and reconstructing methods ushered by thinking facilitated by a teacher. This learning occurs with a framework of a moral reality set in beliefs. Keeping in mind a wheel with spokes, there should be relationship of practical, useful, and developmental stages to learning with the hub being the school. The *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* exists to satisfy federal funding requirements and has no hub for the analogous school.

Trying to ameliorate critical voices should be done by each state and not in a catch all context through a mandate. *Dewey cringed at change. Don't the present day reformists read my work?* "Frontal attacks are even more wasteful in learning than in war" (Dewey, 1966 p.199). The reasoning for a lesson needs to be thoroughly known and not just a recapitulation of facts. If instructors were to comprehend the need for quality of mental effort, not the production of correct answers, then the measure of educational growth would be profound and short of a revolution (Dewey, 1916). The need of contextual understanding cannot be left understated. Learning occurs within a context of connections which supply content to existing social life. This is one process where lessons may be transmitted to the next generation, and learning ensured a legacy.

He believed in a continuous professional spirit in teaching. This includes the standards and licensure that are prevalent today among the certifying agencies in all the fifty states. He encouraged continuous learning, studying of methods, upgrading pedagogy, and camaraderie. This *esprit de corps* made the calling or

nature of the work a desirable, even vital concern (Dewey, 1913). The National Teacher Advisory Council (TAC) supposedly provides training for implementation of *No Child Left Behind* requirements to teachers. This includes technical issues, standards, accountability, and training. No where is mentioned the professional standards or incorporation of camaraderie of the profession. It becomes an edict without input from the ones doing the teaching. The young were due protection and proper nurture in Dewey's belief of teacher's responsibility. He believed in continuous study of the questions leading to good teaching through leadership provided by educators formatting public opinion. The *No Child Left Behind Act* prohibits the teacher with implementing policy. Teachers have not been as active as counterparts (in Washington D.C.) trying to raise standards through sweeping federal statutes.

This lack of participation of input for direct change is not unique or new. He addressed his concern for the lack of *esprit de corps* and attributed the major advances in educational policy to philanthropists, charity workers, and social settlements. Yet, the methods of discipline in the classroom and graduation rates seem to be easily attributed to teaching performance even though the profession has to teach to a test instead of actual experience making. The chief motive for a unified professional spirit in teaching continues to be absent today as it was in Dewey's time. *No Child Left Behind* has augmented the lack of teaching spirit and arguably made it worse through the lack of leadership. *No Child Left Behind* invites a mechanical response to providing assessments. Dewey thought much more of the profession of teaching. He viewed it as an intellectual enterprise and not a routine mechanical activity (Dewey, 1913). *No Child Left Behind* retards and discourages building of *esprit d corps* because of the

corralling methodology to address assessment planning and implementation. The teacher is not in the school to impose regimen, establish habits, but to become a member of the community to select specific influences “which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences” (Dewey, 1897 p.7). Teachers should model moral training implicit with teaching how to get along with others in work and thought. Many of these influences came about in relation to the child’s own social life. Dewey believed literature to be a reflex expression and interpreted it as a social experience. This relation created by literature with its need to read is important but the interpretation of what is read should radiate the reflection of the experience.

The responsibility of carrying out the instruction must be born by all those concentrated with distributing it. This means every human being “with their brains and their hearts, by hundreds or thousands of people in a dozen or so at the top, no matter how wise and skillful they are, is not to concentrate responsibility—it is to diffuse irresponsibility” (Dewey, 1913 p. 112). NCLB has not given more control to the aforementioned people, but instead, it limited the control and forbearance to create and accept responsibility, for issues like diversity, large classroom populations, and consolidation. The federal government cannot proclaim top down solutions to local problems best resolved through a democratic society tackling these issues distributed to responsible citizen input. According to Dewey, the teacher’s business was simply to ascertain the discipline of life that should come to the child wholly based on the larger experience and wisdom of those involved. *Contemplating assessments, he thought grades and promotion should be based on the same standard* (Dewey, 1897). And he considered tests to be of use only as they examine the child’s fitness for

social life and foreshadow the place he can best serve and receive assistance.

One must review past successes using Dewey's life to reflect on the advances that have been given little recognition in the present era. In an experiment during the Depression-era America, a small school system became an experiment for the community of Arthurdale, WV. This 1930's area suffered severe economic and educational deprivation. The Arthurdale experiment fostered a principle of giving several hundred disadvantaged families an education designed around the community and individual transformation. It promoted learning around the needs and wishes of the poor. Dewey helped design the curriculum and selection of educators who taught in the school system. He believed these schools to be of special value and is quoted as saying Arthurdale possessed "extraordinary significance to education" (Clapp, 1952 p.vii). These schools became noted to a degree where they attracted a hundred plus visitors weekly to observe the success and transformation of the community residents and its student population.

Then, as presently exists, finances dictated the delivery of resources, and Arthurdale succumbed to those forces. Now, more than a half century later, funding again dictates how the federal government supports education with *No Child Left Behind* being the yardstick. It seems clichéd to think what goes around comes around, but education issues seem to be reinvented more than they are overcome. When community members and schools worked together through democracy and fostering group solutions, Arthurdale flourished leaving a legacy for those people and their children. Dewey's philosophy showed that it could be successful even in economic times where a dollar was harder to obtain than most of present state educational budgets. Given the present disgruntlement

with *No Child Left Behind*, the input for democratic alteration remains to be seen. Present educational values do not have the same significance as it did to the families of students freezing in winters at Arthurdale in the 1930's. These families valued their schoolhouse coupled with building their Jeffersonian civilization. Education is mainly a social process, so the community becomes a vital channel for its successes and failures (Dewey, 1938). By making the school the focus of the community a myriad of other issues were also confronted at Arthurdale. Educators addressed medical needs, social activities, and leisure pursuits through the schools. Henceforth, mutual trust from community building provided the residents with insurance for success of the schools. This followed Dewey philosophy for building a society through community development. He thought that students should work in wood, metal, weaving, sewing, cooking and in general ways of learning. These subjects were not thought of as separate and distinct entities because they incorporate use of hands and cooperation.

A society becomes a team when the group holds a common goal, a common spirit, and mutual aims. These common aims require developing an interchange of thought and sympathetic feelings. There is a uniform empathy which develops and shared among the group (Dewey, 1902). Many of the issues which prompted the passing of *No Child Left Behind* were evident in earlier times such as discipline problems, overcrowding, and teacher development. He believed a major reason that a school cannot organize as a natural social unit is due to the absence of common activity. Dewey witnessed this occurring on the playground in game and sport, and considered it predictable when children played (Dewey, 1902). "How children play reflects the life going on around them" (Clapp, 1952 p.191). The architect of the

Arthurdale schools designed the plans so there were gardens, nearby woods, and plenty of playground space. “There was always a ballgame going on” (Whipkey, 2009). Children had roads to walk on and sled when it snowed. The layout of the homes lent convenience of social activity and conversation at all levels.

The educators at Arthurdale believed they had to share in the trials and problems in order to succeed with the students. Teachers visited the homes of students and mentored work in these settings. They fostered work habits, building skills, and active participation in education. The educators guided and integrated activities whereby intellectual framework could develop culture stemming from the interests found at the school. In addition to sporting events, there were plays, quilting and sewing demonstrations, canning classes, and concerts. Community field trips helped the children gain insights to their environment and interactions of people. They became an integrated part of events, business transactions, and day-to-day life at Arthurdale. This reflected Dewey’s belief in hands on activities in the educational process.

For Dewey, the student should exercise his thoughts, not the rudimentary drill of *No Child Left Behind* review. The goal was to learn and apply later. Education “is a progress of living and not a preparation for future living” (Dewey, 1897 p.63). The school is a facsimile of real life and provides opportunities for development in a Dewey mindset of simplifying the world for children to experience and to grow into (Kilpatrick, 1971). Schools are now in a debate of self process cultivated in creative self activity. *No Child Left Behind* has furthered this thinking disregarding hands on inquiry methodology. *He knew learning was something that went beyond the classroom, and he promoted physical activity:* “Upon the playground, in game and sport, social organization takes

place spontaneously and inevitably" (Dewey, 1903 p.10). Dewey frowned at the current practice of allotting time to be used for rudimentary skill building, like reading and memorizing multiplication tables. Both skills can be practiced at home or places conducive to such activity. *He accepted time for experimenting and for teachers to try new ideas and methods obviously with a goal to promote democracy.* There is a disdain in not promoting liberty of thought leading to learning. This is unapparent in the present context of teaching to a test, especially how to score well on *Adequate Yearly Progress* assessments.

The subject needs to be translated into a format for immediate and specific transference. That means it should be individualized. This is like play and its reinforcing experience. *He was a pragmatist and realized that preparing the child needed doing in a way which ideas became linked, connected, in order for the tools developed and application occurred as he or she might encounter situations.* "It is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be like in twenty years from now. Hence it is impossible to prepare the child for any precise set of conditions" (Dewey, 1897). A student needs to train the eye and ear and hand as tools to take command when judged to exercise action directed by judgment. This can be thought of as a bonding to other human beings and certainly was in evidence at Arthurdale and their schools. Education should begin with insight into a child's capacitates and directing it towards assessment for ranking, goes against the habits of social development. *He recalled writing, "I believe school, as an institution, should simply social life: should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form"* (Dewey, 1897 p.9).

In summary, the human race marked decisions with alacrity and little thought to the future. *Learning is not a neat affair as he typed:* "The history of man shows,

however, that man takes his enjoyment neat, and at as short range as possible" (Dewey, 1934 p. 69). The justification of the *No Child Left Behind Act* was a short sighted remedy for educational reform. In trying to highlight transparency, closing failing schools, bringing equity, raising standards, and improving curriculum, *No Child Left Behind* produced a culture of assessment without its accompanying experiential component. Learning best occurs when the experience connects with other aspects so transfer of the knowledge becomes easily retrievable. Memorization based assessments for merely obtaining a 'score' for a ranking "dulls the ability to use knowledge" (Dewey, 1910 p. 144). The nature of the experience is what indelibly connects the learning narrative. The ideas support community building and being a good person. Dewey most probably would have admonished the implementation of curriculum using assessment criteria developed through a program like *No Child Left Behind*. The *No Child Left Behind Act* creates programs that deal with passing *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* goals.

Adequate Yearly Progress supposedly identifies troubled schools, but not whether learning occurs. States use *Adequate Yearly Progress* assessments to qualify for continued Title I funding at the expense of identifying learning objectives; and, their contribution on building a community is questionable. *He sought to build good citizenship through participation in school curriculum and activities leading to accepting responsibility, empathy, and mentoring collective community behavior.* *No Child Left Behind* lacks the rationale and scope for connecting experience as he bites his lip. "But the basic material for study cannot be picked up in a cursory manner" (Dewey, 1938 p.52). This is the approach of the *No Child Left Behind Act* has impressed upon public opinion and made

it into policy. Educational policy needs a thorough understanding of pedagogy in order for practical and successful implementation to work. While being a pragmatist, Dewey realized that curriculum needed to be founded in accepted values held by the community. This was the way that it had the best chance of success.

He believed in progressive education and saw his contribution at Arthurdale as testament to what schools could be by the nature of the success witnessed in that community. “Dewey believed that Arthurdale possessed what was in many respects the best public schools in the United States” (Dewey, 1936 p. 236). To him, Arthurdale schools were proof of what democracy could produce in America. The experiment vindicated his belief in the educative process through sharing, cooperation, and engagement of students and teachers meeting as equals and learners. *He reached the end his walk, and the surroundings of the brownstones close to Columbia. It had been a long day and more were sure to come. It is all in my writings. Experience is the best educator, not an assessment used to play catch up. No Child Left Behind is a politician's 'do over' he mused and sat down at the dinner table.*

At Arthurdale, the teachers' needed independent action to provide direction for the impoverished community. In the end they succeeded during a time of great deprivation and national crisis. This augmented the philosophy of Dewey regarding the teaching profession. He thought that teachers should have the “the ability to think independently and critically, together with command of the tools and processes that give access to the accumulated products of past cultures” (Dewey, 1930 p. 236). *He realized that decisions would need to be made in a continuous fashion by the nature of the vast change he had witnessed in his life. The social side of teaching*

would include personal development so there would be desire and will to share democratic thought which has been unevenly obtained as historical events dictated the education rank and file. When a vacuum exists, it soon is filled with quick fixes such as NCLB. Schools need to decide what the nature of their social function is and “general versus specific objectives, or whether they have a responsibility for social planning” (Dewey, 1930 p.326). Dewey wanted people to question life, knowing this would spiral down into a course of action. He questioned the act of public education: “Is it the duty of the schools to give indoctrination in economic and political, including nationalistic principles that are current in contemporary society” (Dewey, 1930 p.328). One would have to weave this question into the present controversy of *No Child Left Behind*, and its questionable success. “What tests and what method of their administration would tend to greater release of creative work on the part of teachers” (Dewey, 1930 p. 328). The transfer of thinking habits becomes restricted and subsumed when teaching is dictated by teaching based on assessment like *No Child Left Behind* does. This he acknowledged “...that much of the present adverse reaction of the public to free consideration of social questions is due to the failure of the teaching profession to claim actively and in a organized way its own autonomy” (Dewey, 1930 p. 248). It now needs to claim the notoriety the profession deserves. The alternative is one where soon teachers will be providing lessons and insights at drive in windows as noted by Dewey how humans like its “enjoyment neat, and at short range as possible” (Dewey, 1938 p. 69).

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