

Philosophical and Educational Thought of Froebel

Philosophical Thought of Froebel

Froebel was born on 21 April, 1782 at Overveas village in Thurinnian forest, Germany. His complete name was Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel. His father was a padre in the same village and mother was a housewife. His mother died when he was only 9 months old. His father remarried. His father remained busy in his work while the second mother did not look after him. He wandered here and there like a neglected child. However, the environment at home was religious, so he had a strong foundation of religious attributes.

Froebel believed in the existence of God from the very beginning. At that time, the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Spinoza and Descartes were popular, and on the other hand the results of scientific discoveries were coming to the fore. It was natural for Froebel to be influenced by them. But whatever he thought in this field and drew conclusions, are perfectly original, it is his own philosophical thought. We shall try to discuss the metaphysics, epistemology, logic, axiology and ethics of his philosophical thought.

Metaphysics of Froebel's Philosophical Thought

Froebel observed that all beings and trees and plants have capability to develop as their specific species. Thinking about the cause of this development, he found the cause of self-element. In his view, God is the creator of this universe and is complete in Himself and pervaded each particle of the universe in equal measure. Froebel has termed it as pervading unity in diversity. He considered man as the best creature of the universe because he can experience this unity by his superior mental faculties. He considered the human life as purposeful, in his view the supreme aim of man is self-realization.

Epistemology and Logic of Froebel's Philosophical Thought

Each object, in Froebel's view, is progressive and the basic power of this progress of development is inherent within it which grows on the basis of certain fundamental principles. According to Froebel, to acquaint oneself with the

progressive development of matter and beings is knowledge and to know God as the basic cause of their development is true knowledge. According to Froebel, man can gain any type of knowledge by his own innate powers.

Axiology and Ethics of Froebel's Philosophical Thought

Froebel believed in the eternal moral rules and values. In his view, morality is not relative to individual, society or country, it is not relative to time and place, it is determined by God, it is eternal, universal and perennial. In his view, truth, beauty and goodness are eternal values, man's conduct should be guided by them.

Educational Thought of Froebel

Froebel was much influenced by Comenius, Rousseau and Pestalozzi, and mostly by Pestalozzi's thought. He had received his training in teaching methods from Pestalozzi, and in this sense, he was the pupil of Pestalozzi. But he has not blindly followed any previous thinker. He contemplated himself, experimented himself and drew conclusions, and used these conclusions in his life, and published them in the form of books. We shall present his educational thought and practice in brief.

Concept of Education

Froebel saw that the whole tree is inherent in the seed, and it has the capability to grow into a complete tree; only it has to be made available the necessary soil, air, water and sunlight. He saw that the same principle applies to all beings of the world. In his view, manifestation of these innate faculties of man and their development is education. In his own words, "**Education is a process by which a child makes its internal external.**"

Aims of Education

Froebel was a pantheist. In his view, God pervades everywhere. So the purpose, aim and ideal of man is to know the unity in diversity. Now the question arises, how this knowledge can be realized. He replies that it can be got by the abundance of moral rules. He considered truth, beauty and goodness as moral rules and laid emphasis on the development of these rules from the very childhood. He considered social life as necessary for their development, so he laid stress on making man skilled in living a social life. He considered physical and intellectual development as necessary for distinction between truth and untruth. In his view, the aims of education should be just these. We can express these aims in modern terminology as follows :

Ultimate Aim

- (1) To make man understand his divine form (soul) and divine unity of the world.

Helping Aims

- (1) To effect physical and intellectual development of the children.
- (2) To bring about social development of the children to train them in socially useful moral behaviour.
- (3) To incline the children towards abidance of the moral rules and to effect their character development.
- (4) To develop divine elements in the children and to incline them towards living a pure life.

Curriculum of Education

Pestalozzi was the first man in the educational world of Europe who based education on psychology. Froebel took forward this view of his teacher. He understood the developmental process of man and thought that this development takes place in different forms in the children of different age groups. He developed the following principles regarding the curriculum construction :

- (1) The subjects and activities of the curriculum should be determined according to the physical and mental capability of the children.
- (2) All subjects and activities of the curriculum should be interrelated, they should have unity.
- (3) The curriculum should be such which can be completed by activities.
- (4) The curriculum should be based on the principle of human development.

According to Froebel, the initial period of man's life is childhood, it is the stage of playings, so the children of this age should be given the opportunity to develop independently. The second stage is the boyhood, at this stage the children should be given opportunities to learn different vocations. And the third stage is that of youth, at this stage they should be trained in social life. He has specifically expressed his opinion regarding the children from 4 years to 8 years, and has presented the curriculum for them :

- (1) Games and exercise.
- (2) Language knowledge.
- (3) Art and music.
- (4) Nature observation.
- (5) History and geography.
- (6) Science and mathematics.
- (7) Religious education (Christianity).

Methods of Teaching

Froebel has chiefly expressed his thought about the education of children from 4 years to 8 years, and has developed the **kindergarten method** for their education. We shall discuss here the principles and methodology of kindergarten method.

Fundamental Principles of Kindergarten Method

Froebel's educational principles are based on idealistic philosophy and psychology. His kindergarten method is based on the following principles :

1. Principle of Unity : Froebel was an idealistic philosopher. He observed unity in diversity of the world. Froebel wanted his pupils to experience this unity. He constructed several techniques for making them experience this unity. The ultimate aim of all these was to make them experience the unity underlying diversity, that is God.

2. Principle of Making Internal External : Froebel considered man as born with the faculties to gain knowledge. According to him to obtain knowledge is his natural feature, only he should be given such external environment that his knowledge develops in the right direction. Knowledge of activities should not be imposed upon him from outside, rather he should be given such environment that he becomes curious to receive them.

3. Principle of Freedom : Froebel considered freedom as essential for the natural development of the children. He clarified that interference in their natural development in any way hinders their development. But he opposed the freedom as advocated by Rousseau. He did not give the children the freedom to become frolicsome. In his view, there should be a limit to freedom and this limit should be to the extent as their thoughts and activities do not cause any harm to others. Even in the situation of complete freedom, we should take care of convenience of other members of the society. Froebel had not experienced love and sympathy in his childhood, so he knew the significance of love and sympathy. He has laid foremost emphasis on affectionate and sympathetic behaviour in his teaching system.

4. Principle of Self-Activity : Froebel considered development as an internal activity, so he laid emphasis on providing maximum opportunities to the children for self-activity. According to Froebel, the chief characteristic of children is self-activity. By self-activity, Froebel meant that activity which the child desires to do himself and does it with interest. The real development of child's personality depends on his self-activity. In the viewpoint of Froebel, the significance of self-activity is not limited to only physical development, rather it brings about spiritual development of the child too. According to him, infinite divine principle demands of man free self-activity.

5. Principle of Learning by Play-way Method : Froebel studied the nature of the children and reached the conclusion that they have natural interest in games, so he accepted the significance of play-way method for the education of children. He clarified that the children have complete freedom in the play-way method to express themselves, so they take interest in it and become active. Thus, the play-way method abides by the above two principles.

6. Principle of Social Participation : Froebel knew this fact that man has instinct of gregariousness that makes him a social being. He also accepted the fact that any type of development of man is possible only in the social environment. Home, school and society provide him with opportunities to do self-activity, so the children should necessarily take part in social activities. This is the reason that Froebel has provided free opportunities to the children for collective games, dialogue and other activities in his method.

Means of Self-Expression in Kindergarten Method

In kindergarten method utmost significance is attached to self-expression, and for this self-expression, Froebel has provided three means, which are :

- (1) Song
- (2) Gesture
- (3) Construction.

These three means of self-expression are different but with a unity of purpose. For example, children can sing a song on listening a story, can act while singing a song, or can present a story in a drama or can draw a picture on it.

Means and Aids Used in Kindergarten System

Froebel has constructed different types of means and aids for providing opportunities to the children for self-activity and to impart education to them by play-way method, the important of which are as follows :

1. Stories : Froebel has considered stories as important means of teaching. Children have natural inclination for listening stories, so Froebel has selected several stories for children's education. There are several advantages in the use of stories. The children are given language knowledge by stories and their vocabulary is expanded. The knowledge of history and geography can also be imparted by story method and their creative and active powers can be aroused. Stories play a great role in character and moral development of the children. But we can get these advantages from the stories only when they are presented in an interesting manner.

2. Plays : Froebel has given special place to recreational creative games in his kindergarten system. In recreational games he has included running, jumping and walking, and the construction of different objects by sand, soil and boards. In order to develop imagination power in the children, he has included several imaginary games in his system. For imaginary games, he has constructed several types of models or gifts by which the children use to make different types of shapes by their imagination. For the development of social qualities in the children, he has accepted the significance of group games. Among the group games are included music, dance and plays. Froebel has developed various games for the knowledge of different subjects, character building and vocational education.

3. Mothers Play and Nursery Rhymes : These songs are related with children's games, creative tasks and vocations. These songs are very interesting for the children and are helpful in the enhancement of their true knowledge. These songs are arranged in a definite order, such as first comes the song of sowing seeds in the field, followed by the one pertaining to the protection of plants and then reaping the crop. The children sing these songs and act according to the subject-matter in them. The teacher presents these songs with acting, and then the teacher and children present the songs with acting. These songs bring about the physical and mental development of the children and aesthetic feeling is aroused in them.

4. Gifts : Froebel laid specific emphasis on the training of sense organs and for it, he constructed 20 presents or gifts. The following 7 are the important of them :

(i) First Gift (Colourful Woolen Balls) : The first gift comprises of 6 woolen balls of different colours. These balls are suspended to a wooden frame which can be moved here and there with a thread.

This gift is used to impart different type of sense knowledge. The colours of the balls and their movements are used to train the eyes, their sound is used to train the ears and their touch is used to experience hardness or softness. If this game is played rapidly, it strengthens the muscles. When this game is played by the children collectively, it develops social qualities in them.

(ii) Second Gift (Sphere, Cylinder and Cube) : In the second gift are included a sphere, a cylinder and a cube. All these are placed in a box and are suspended with the help of a thread.

This gift is used to acquaint the children with the objects of different shapes and they are acquainted with their different characteristics. This gift is also used to develop touch power in the children. This gift presents a basis for understanding other gifts and their use.

(iii) Third Gift (A large cube comprising eight equal cubes) : This gift comprises of a cube of 4" divided into eight equal parts as cubes, which are placed in a wooden box. The box has a lid which moves the cubes.

This gift is used to activate exploratory instinct of the children. The children make different larger cubes and different designs with the help of these eight cubes. It satisfies their creative instinct and they become active, at the same time it trains their sense organs. Imaginary power of the children is also developed in making different designs. One cube in eight cubes and eight cubes in one cube also makes the child experience unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

(iv) Fourth Gift (A small cube having eight equal cubes) : This gift comprises of a 1" cube divided into eight equal rectangular parts, and the eight rectangular solids are placed in a box.

This gift is another form of the third gift but is a little more complex than that. The children make more difficult and complex designs with the help of rectangular solids. This gift can also be used to make table, chair, door and different types of houses. This gift has the same utility as that of the third gift, there is only the difference of degree.

(v) Fifth Gift (A cube having twenty-seven equal cubes) : This gift is still more complex than the earlier four gifts. A 3" cube is divided into 27 equal cubes. Three cubes of these cubes are divided diagonally to prepare six equal pieces. This gift not only has solids of right angle, but also those of acute angles. This gift is used to make designs with longitudinal and horizontal lines in addition to diagonal designs.

This gift also develops those powers which are developed by the third and fourth gifts, only with a difference in degree. This gift develops the power of construction of new objects in the children. This gift also manifests unity in diversity. This gift is meant for elder children.

(vi) Sixth Gift (A cube having twenty-seven equal rectangular solids) : In this gift, the cube mentioned as fifth gift is divided into 27 rectangular solids. Six rectangular solids are cut from the middle to make twelve rectangular solids. Three other rectangular solids are divided along length to make six columns. This gift can be used to make house and other complex figures and it can be decorated with furniture too.

This gift also possesses the same utility as that of other gifts. Of course, it treads further in degree. This gift is also meant for elder children.

(vii) Seventh Gift (Wooden pieces of different shapes) : There are five boxes in this gift in which wooden pieces of different colours are kept. The first box has square pieces of equal measure; the second has pieces of right angle triangles which are made by cutting the square pieces diagonally; the third box has pieces of triangles with equal arms with different measurements; and the fifth box has pieces of obtuse angle.

The children use these pieces to make different designs of boat, mountain, etc. This is even more complex gift.

Other Gifts : Other gifts comprise of iron rods, sticks, hooks, etc. the children make different designs, as letters, angles and other designs.

5. Occupation : When the experiences are expressed by speech, writing or picture or construction of an object, they firm up in the mind. Different occupations have been included in the kindergarten system with this fact in view. These occupations are of different types, such as making figures, cutting paper, making rosary, making earthen toys, weaving material, weaving basket, spinning cotton, weaving cloth, sewing cloth, singing, dancing and exercise.

These occupations are kept in the order of their difficulty. The children are first made to do simple occupations, then they are led to do more difficult and then still more difficult. For example, if the occupation of making earthen toys is chosen, the children would be made to first make spherical ball, followed by pear, watermelon and orange, etc. The other occupations too would be arranged in the same order of difficulty from simple to complex.

All these occupations are based on games and activity, so the children take interest in them. The children perform these occupations collectively which develop sociality in them. These occupations also develop creative imagination and creative power in the children.

Working of Kindergarten

In the kindergarten system, daily tasks of the school are divided into two shifts. The first shift imparts religious and moral education, training of sense organs, writing, reading and mathematics; and the second shift comprises of teaching of all other subjects and performance of activities. In this system, teaching of different subjects and training in different activities is done by different methods :

1. Religious and Moral Education : For it, the school begins with the daily gathering. In it, all teachers and students pray to God collectively. After this, the teachers incline the students towards religion and morality with the help of small stories.

2. Training of Sense Organs : For it, the gifts are used. Froebel has constructed different gifts for the training of different sense organs.

3. Teaching of Reading and Writing : For it, the students are taught reading and writing at the same time. The knowledge of letters is imparted with the words and proper pronunciation is also taught. Besides, the children are made to arrange wooden pieces to make letters at play. At this time, the teacher draws the letter on the blackboard and the children follow her by writing on the blackboard or in their notebooks. Oral language is developed by nature observation, games, use of gifts and execution of occupations.

4. Education of Mathematics : Knowledge of mathematics is imparted in a natural way by the use of wooden and stone pieces and metal spheres. The children count them, exchange them and thus learn how to count, add and subtract. The knowledge of numerals is done like that of letters and counting and tables are exercised in individual and collective way. The gifts are used for the concrete knowledge of mathematical shapes.

Recess is given at the end of the first shift. The children eat, rest and recreate themselves and do other activities according to their interests.

5. Education in Games, Physical Exercise and Music : The second shift begins with games, physical exercise and music. This work is done collectively; the children take part in collective activities and the teachers make an effort to keep the children engaged in these activities with interest.

6. Teaching of Other Subjects : After games and music education, teaching of art, natural science, history and geography and training in occupations begin. The knowledge of natural science is developed by observation of nature. The knowledge of history and geography is imparted with the help of stories, pictures and gifts. Effort is made to develop the whole knowledge in an order from concrete to abstract. The selection of occupations is done keeping in view the age and interests of the children. Training in occupations is conducted collectively. The teachers guide and the children execute the occupations.

Discipline

Froebel was aware of the divine form of the children, he respected the children, and therefore, attached significance to internal discipline in place of repressive discipline. He clarified that if the child develops the feeling of self-discipline, he would behave in the society in a disciplined way. In his view, wisdom is necessary for self-discipline. Imprudent activities take the form of purposeless games. So the child should be given limited freedom according to rules. But it does not imply that the child should not be given any freedom; he should be given freedom but it should be self-controlled.

Teacher

The child is the focal point of education in Froebel's teaching system, but the teacher is no less responsible. According to Froebel, in a school like garden, the teacher like gardener is responsible for the proper development of the students like plants. He should give suitable environment to the children for their natural development and should be helpful in this process. In the viewpoint of Froebel, the teacher should behave with the children like a mother in a sensitive and motherly way. Therefore, he was in the favour of appointing only women as teachers at this level. He reasoned that women are more sensitive as compared to men and they understand the problems of the infants more clearly.

Student

Froebel was also aware of the fact that a being develops according to his inherent capability. So he considered the student as the centre of educational process. He declared that the infants should be given free opportunities for their development and the whole planning of education for the infants should be based on the natural abilities, interests and needs of the infants.

School

Froebel has only expressed his thought about infant schools. He has termed the infant schools as gardens. The garden is just like an environment where the gardener looks after the trees and plants. It has pure and cool air, pleasant and peaceful environment. In the viewpoint of Froebel, the school environment too should be just like this. Pure air and light should be available there, its environment should be beautiful and attractive just like that of a garden; the teachers should be just like the gardener who should look after the development of the plants and trees in the form of children.

Kindergarten has its own form. Its building, furniture, sports grounds, sports goods and gifts, etc. are made and selected keeping in view the interests of the children. Only women teachers are appointed in them because they can identify the needs of children easily and can behave with them in a motherly way. In brief, the kindergarten system is according to the nature of the children, it is the centre of their attraction, the children go there of their own free accord, and if it is not so, then take it that you have failed to give the form of a kindergarten to your school. The time of a kindergarten school is specified. The time of school is determined according to the season and each period comprises of 20-25 minutes.

Other Aspects of Education

Mass Education : Froebel has not thought about education as a whole, but when he talks of the experience of unity in diversity, he sees no distinction in this experience. If he would have alive today, he would have certainly advocated mass education.

Women Education : Froebel has not written anything separately on women education but he favoured their education.

Vocational Education : Froebel has considered only infant education, so he did not pay any attention to vocational education.

Religious and Moral Education : Froebel was a religious person, he was a pantheist, he believed in eternal moral values of truth, beauty and goodness, and was a follower of Christianity. He laid most stress on the education of all these in infant education. In his view, religion and morality should be founded in the infancy.

Evaluation of Educational Thought of Froebel

The evaluation of any object, activity or thought is done on the basis of certain definite norms. Froebel has chiefly expressed his thought about the child education from 4 years to 8 years and has worked in this field only. Kindergarten system is his contribution to the educational field. Therefore, we shall evaluate his educational thought and his contribution to the educational field on its basis.

Concept of Education

In the viewpoint of Froebel, education brings out the inherent powers of the child and by it, the inherent potentialities of the child are developed; his sense organs and intellect are developed. According to him, education is a process by which a child makes its internal external.

It is evident that Froebel has accepted education as a process and has taken it as a means to bring out the inner powers of man towards outside. In this context, the first thing is that he has not clarified the form of this process, and second, bringing out everything from the inside is also not true. Man possesses power to learn, but he learns that what is taught to him and which is outside.

Aims of Education

In the viewpoint of Froebel, the basic aim of education is to make the children experience their divine form and unity of the world, and for the attainment of this aim, their physical and intellectual development has to be effected, they have to be trained in social and moral behaviour, and their character development has to be effected and they have to be necessarily led to live a pure life.

On the analysis of the aims of education as determined by Froebel we find that they include only the spiritual aims of man, and not his physical aims. And today, education is used to bring about development both of physical and spiritual aspects of man. Moreover, making the child experience his divine form is only a pipedream.

Curriculum of Education

Froebel has expressed his thought about the construction of curriculum for children basically. He has propounded four principles for the construction of the curriculum for child education. First, the subjects and activities of the curriculum should be selected on the basis of physical and mental capability of the children. Second, all subjects and activities of the curriculum should be interrelated. Third, the curriculum should be such which can be developed by activities. And fourth, the curriculum should be based on the principle of human development. Froebel constructed his curriculum for children from 4 years to 8 years on the basis of these principles, and gave prominent place to nature observation, games and religious education; and secondary place to language, mathematics and science. He clarified that the knowledge of geography and science can be developed during nature observation; it should of course be done, but under any condition, it should be limited to the life of the children.

There can be no two opinions that the curriculum should be according to the interests and capabilities of the children and it should be such which can be developed with the help of games, but religious education and that too of

Christianity only cannot be acceptable to everybody. The children receive true education of religion at their homes.

Methods of Teaching

Froebel's thought about teaching is limited to infant education. He has emphasized on self-activity and self-learning. He has also emphasized that the children should be given free opportunities to grow according to their ability and capability. All these qualities are found in the play-way method, so Froebel attached importance to learn by play-way. Besides, he has emphasized learning by self-activity, learning by cooperation and learning by objects. But the kindergarten system that Froebel developed on the basis of these principles, has its own merits and demerits. It is necessary to discuss them here.

Merits of Kindergarten Method

Kindergarten system is a good method for education of the children between 4 to 8 years of age. Parker has considered it to be the most important educational reform of the nineteenth century. Though the above discussion brings to the fore all the characteristics of this system, yet we will discuss them in an orderly way.

1. Spiritual Basis : Froebel was an idealist. He wanted to make the children experience unity (God) in diversity of the world. He constructed the gifts on this basis. The starting of the day in a kindergarten school with the prayer and moral stories is aimed at this.

2. Emphasis on Inherent-Activity : Froebel believed that the whole knowledge is inherent in man, it is the function of the teacher to bring it out. The children are given such environment in kindergarten schools as to make them aware where they learn by doing.

3. Psychological Basis : This system is based on freedom, self-activity and education by play-way method, thus this follows two psychological principles of teaching — principle of interest and principle of activity. It is a psychological and effective method of teaching.

4. Emphasis on Self-Activity : In this method, the children learn themselves through play and gifts, and they execute the occupations. The knowledge gained by self-activity is permanent.

5. Women Teachers : Only women are appointed as teachers in kindergarten schools, and they are expected to behave motherly with the children. No punishment is given to the children in these schools; they are treated affectionately and sympathetically.

6. Schools being the Centre of Attraction : There are proper buildings and furniture for the children to sit in kindergarten schools; proper sports material and place; and different types of gifts and occupations for the expression of activity

of the children. There are motherly teachers and there is no fear of any type, as a result, they are the centres of attraction for the children.

7. Teaching Through Senses : In this system, the children are first trained in the use of their sense organs, and through them all types of knowledge and activities are developed. The knowledge and activities learnt through sense organs are clear and permanent.

8. Opportunities for Natural Development : In this system, the child is taken as a child, and not as a mini adult. Free opportunities are provided to him for his natural development.

9. Development of Social Qualities : In this system children take part in group activities, they play group games; perform collective occupations and complete the tasks with each other's cooperation. All this brings about development of social qualities in them.

10. Development of Aesthetic sense : In this system, the children observe nature, do gardening, sing songs and act. All these activities develop their aesthetic sense.

11. Development of Creative Power : In this system, the children make different shapes with the help of different gifts and perform several creative tasks (occupations). It is natural for them to develop their creative power by this.

Demerits of Kindergarten Method

This system is certainly a good system, but is not free from demerits at the same time. It has the following demerits :

1. Excessive Emphasis on Spiritual Development : Comparatively more emphasis is given on spiritual development in this system. How much of discussion on religion and ethics after prayers can be understood by the children of this age! It is only laughable to clear the concept of unity in diversity by the construction of a cube by 27 smaller cubes or rectangular pieces.

2. Absence of Complete Freedom : Though this system was made on the principle of freedom, but the children have to follow the school time table in practice. Moreover, they are bound by gifts and occupations in such a way that they are bound in their small world itself.

3. Excess of Play, Gifts and Occupations : Doing school activities with the spirit of play is one thing and learning what play can teach is altogether another thing. Froebel has constructed so many gifts and selected occupations more than needed for his system. Excess of anything diminishes interest.

4. Play and Rhymes Not Interesting : To play rhymes as constructed by Froebel lack in steps and melody, the children are neither able to learn them nor able to sing them. The pictures related to rhymes are also not good.

5. Some Gifts are Unsuitable : The gifts that Froebel constructed for his teaching system, some of them are very abnormal. The children have no interest in them in the modern electronic age.

6. Lack of Integration of Knowledge and Activities : In this system, no effort is made to unite knowledge and activities as a unit. Consequently, different subjects and activities are not correlated.

7. Lack of Self-Dependence : The children generally do all the tasks collectively, so they do not become self-dependent.

8. Lack of Individual Development : Individual differences of the children are not kept in view in this system; all children have to perform similar tasks; consequently individual development of the children cannot take place.

9. Expensive : The games, gifts and occupations used in this system need a large amount of money. Such an expensive educational system cannot be adopted for general education in our country.

Discipline

Froebel has attached importance to internal discipline. He reasoned that the feeling of self-discipline cannot be developed by any type of bindings, it needs free environment. But this freedom should be self-controlled.

It is evident that Froebel favoured giving limited freedom according to rules. The modern educationists consider freedom and discipline as two aspects of the same activity.

Teacher

Froebel has compared teacher with a gardener. According to him, the function of the teacher is to look after the students just as the gardener looks after his plants. According to Froebel, a woman teacher can look after infants properly, therefore only woman teachers should be appointed in a kindergarten school. Froebel expected of them to behave with the children just like a mother and give them no punishment in any case.

It is suitable from the viewpoint of democracy and psychology, but if a child involves himself in an improper activity or behaviour, then it becomes necessary to control him as well.

Student

Froebel considered student as the centre of education. He laid emphasis on planning the education for the infants according to their interests, capabilities, abilities and needs.

Froebel is right to say that the education for the infants should be based on their abilities and capabilities and they should be given freedom; but we must not

lose sight of the fact that man is basically an animal. Therefore, in order to lead the child from his instinctive behaviour to socially approved behaviour, the needs and aspirations of the child as well as those of the society should be kept in view.

School

According to Froebel, schools should be the centre of attraction. Froebel has termed infant schools as kindergarten where the teachers, as gardeners, look after the children, as plants, and are helpful in their natural development. He has said that proper building, furniture, games and place, different gifts and occupations for the expression of activity are necessary for a kindergarten school. Besides, he wants motherly teachers for it.

Who will disagree with the above views of Froebel! However, the excess of everything is bad. The means required in a kindergarten school are so numerous that they may cause distraction in place of attraction. With this in view, any idea or activity should be adopted only to the extent to which it remains attractive and beneficial.

Other Aspects of Education

Though Froebel has thought about infant education and worked on it only, yet his thoughts and working system clarify that he was a supporter of mass education. He did not distinguish between boys and girls for education. He has laid much emphasis on religion and moral education, which is not acceptable in the modern age.

Influence of Froebel

Froebel has basically expressed his views about infant education and has developed the kindergarten system for the teaching of infants based on the play-way method. His contribution in this field is so immense that he is known as a messiah in the educational world. He is known as the inventor of the play-way method. In almost all countries of the world are established kindergarten schools in which the children are taught while at play.

Conclusion

Man is the product of his circumstances; it is another thing that some persons develop according to their circumstances and some persons against to their circumstances. Froebel was the son of a padre, so he had developed religious attributes from the very beginning. When he was only 9 months old, his mother expired and the second mother did not give him such of love which is expected of a mother. This is the reason that he could understand the significance of motherly love deeply. In the two years that he lived with the forest rangers, he experienced unity in diversity. At that time he came to know of the inherent powers of man,

and came to know of the significance of proper environment (breeding and rearing) in the context of his development. His philosophy of life and educational thought are based on these experiences and qualities. The modern educationists are in agreement with the principles on which he has talked of basing child education, but so much use of means and gifts is a point of criticism. This is the reason that almost all countries of the world have established kindergarten schools but have developed the material (stories, games, mother games, rhymes, gifts and occupations) used in them in their own way and use them in their own way. The presence of kindergarten system in all countries of the world is the evidence of Froebel's greatness. The world will owe to this child specialist who recognized the divine power in the infants and invented play-way method.

Test Questions

Essay Type Questions

1. Elaborate the educational thought of Froebel.
2. Introduce the kindergarten system and discuss its working system.
3. Discuss the merits and demerits of the kindergarten system and mention in which form it should be used in India.
4. Evaluate the contribution of Froebel to education.

Short Answer Type Questions

5. Discuss the principles of kindergarten system.
6. Mention the gifts used in the kindergarten system.
7. How is language taught in the kindergarten system?

Objective Questions

8. Select the right alternative :
 - (i) In which country was Froebel born?
 - (a) England
 - (b) Germany
 - (c) France
 - (d) America
 - (ii) What should be the foremost aim of education, according to Froebel?
 - (a) Physical development
 - (b) Training of sense organs
 - (c) Mental development
 - (d) Unity of self

Answers

8. (i) Germany

(ii) Unity of self

