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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Educational Philosophy of Thomas Gavan Duffy: with special reference to the Methods of Teaching in the Primary Schools and its significant impacts on Modern Education.

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Abstract

Educational Philosophy is the applied philosophy. Education and Philosophy are closely interrelated and complementary to each other. Every aspect of education has a philosophical base. The aims of education, curriculum, methods of teaching, the system of discipline, the role of teachers etc., are influenced and determined by Philosophy. Thomas Gavan Duffy was an eminent Educational Philosopher who founded, guided and developed hundreds of schools in the Presidency of Madras from 1911 to 1941. He was a son of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, the 8th Premier of Australia. He landed Pondicherry in 1911 for the Christian Mission and committed himself for the cause of education of the underprivileged. He was one of the members in the educational council of the British Government. He was the champion of village schools and venerated by thousands of beneficiaries of his schools. His pioneering efforts in the reform of elementary educational system in the Presidency of Madras made his name legendary even in his life time among the educationists. He had evolved and explored an educational philosophy which aimed at the holistic development of the children. With the aim of giving relevant, purposeful and helpful education, he constructed the curriculum which was practical and useful, invented and introduced innovative methods of teaching, advocated school discipline which ensured self discipline, self esteem and self governance and well drafted the role and function of the teachers to achieve the objectives of education. The methods of teaching introduced by Duffy were innovative, relevant, attractive, inspiring and useful and were based on life experiences with practical aids. These methods were well directed towards the wholistic development of the children. These methods of Duffy still have great influence and significant impact on the modern education.

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Introduction:-

Thomas Gavan Duffy was “the Great Man” in every sphere of life. He was a great scholar, philosopher, educationist, social reformer and a man of God. He was born at Nice, France on 23rd December 1888 of an Irish father Sir Charles Gavan Duffy who fought for the freedom of his motherland and became the 8th Premier of

Victoria. Duffy had landed to Pondicherry in 1911 for the Christian mission. Till 1941, for three decades he had been founding, guiding and developing hundreds of 'Little Schools' in the Presidency of Madras. Duffy, who had been educated in different nations, travelled far and wide and had experience of different peoples and cultures had successfully synthesized different philosophies and came with the educational philosophy for the ordinary masses. His educational philosophy is very much Naturalistic in its setting, Idealistic in its aims and objectives and Pragmatic in its method and plan of action. His educational philosophy was more ideal, practical, natural and useful and aimed at the holistic development of all irrespective of origin or religion. In the Pondicherry Mission, Duffy brought a uniformity of practice in the administration and control of village schools. He introduced the common syllabus, the same texts, the same method of teaching and standards of examination to all the little schools in the Pondicherry Mission which comprises the present civil districts of Cuddalore, Villupuram, Chengulpet, Kancheepuram, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Salem, Namakkal, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur of the State of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry in Indi. (Brady Gerard, Thomas Gavan Duffy, p.334). His innovative methods of teaching were very relevant and helpful to impart the quality and holistic education to the children. These methods are being used even today in the modern education.

Duffian Methods of Teaching in the Primary Schools:-

Method has an important place in education. It is through method the teacher establishes and maintains the contact between the child and subject matter. Duffy was an enthusiast for the employment of novelty and imagination in the educative process. He said that talking is easy, teaching is hard; and influencing the will of the child whom God has made free is a grace given only to those who seek it very earnestly". (Brady Gerard, Thomas Gavan Duffy, p.472). Hence Duffy introduced different innovative and useful methods of teaching in the Pondicherry Mission schools in the Presidency of Madras.

The Correlation method:-

'Correlation' means 'connect or to be connected'. Correlation in teaching indicates a technique which shows the reciprocal relationship between various subjects of the curriculum for making knowledge concrete and permanent. For Duffy the most objective of education was to prepare the children for future life. This objective would be achieved only if education was correlated with life. Therefore he correlated the various subjects with various aspects of life in order to make the subject relevant and practical to the day to day life of the children. For an example, Duffy introduced the theme 'cattle' for the kindergarten class. The classes started with the conversation between teacher and the children about cattle known to the children, connected with the life. The teacher also made efforts to correlate the given subject with the other subjects like Arithmetic, drawing, clay modeling, bead and stick laying, song and storytelling. (Duffy, Siruvarkalin Thozhan, Vol.6 (1931) sheet No. I A 1(1)).

By using this method of correlation, Duffy had two purposes namely to correlate the main subject with all other subjects taught on the day and to connect the subject with the day today life. It was moving from known to the unknown, simple to the complex and concrete to the abstract. It was very useful method to learn the lessons thoroughly and remember it for a long.

The Psychological Method:-

Modern education is based and founded on Psychology. Rousseau once remarked, "The child is a book which the teacher has to learn from page to page". (Walia J. S., Principles and Methods of Education, p.76). Hence the whole concept of education and its implications are based upon psychological methods.

Duffy in his book, "A Think in Time" had given many guidelines to the educators to understand the child and to develop its all round personality by studying the child's interests, aptitudes, natural faculties and the limitations of the child. He reminded his collaborators often the words of Chesterton "In order to teach Latin to John...you must first know John as well as Latin...".The personal files kept about each student were a wonder of precision and care' (Arokiasamy G., (Ed.) Thozhan, 1988, p..105). Duffy followed this method in his Mission schools already in 1913, long before it was known in the educational world. (Arokiasamy, G., Thozhan, 1988, P.36).

Activity Based Learning (ABL) :-

Activity Based Learning (ABL) means that learning is based on doing some hands-on experiments and activities. The idea of activity based learning is rooted in the common notion that children are active learners rather than passive recipients of information. In 1918 itself, Duffy had, with his great innovation and imagination, constructed the curriculum with a lot of activities in teaching the children. He very aptly mentioned that "Children need change.

Vary the routine, the time table, and the occupations as often as you can. Introduce some new thing. Make a fresh start. Too many of our institutions have a tendency to stagnation.’ (Duffy, A Think in Time, p.21)

Duffy admonished the educators to have a good and prior preparation for everyday class and instructed them to collect and prepare teaching aids from their village itself. Beads, pebbles, small nuts, sticks, clay modals are to be used in teaching numbers, addition, multiplication and deduction. (Duffy, Siruvarkalin Thozhan, Vol.III, 1919, part 1, p.12). Thus, Activity Based Learning introduced by Duffy at the dawn of 20th Century, made a tremendous impact on the learning process of the children.

Play way method:-

Play is regarded as the language of the child. What he cannot express through language, he expresses that through his behavior and that behavior is play.

Duffy, as an innovative educational philosopher, had introduced the play way method in his curriculum. He said that “If you want the children to listen, you have to interest them. Modern pedagogy has plenty of tricks for that very purpose; use them. Begin with a story, a true story if possible, and one as close as may be to the children’s own life and interests.” (Duffy, A Think in Time, p. 49).

The underlying activities like singing songs, Music, storytelling, drawing, band, craft, bead and stick laying, play, games and drill, scouting were typical examples for the play way method of Duffy. Thus Duffy had very much insisted to use the play way method as an effective and purposeful medium of educating the children. He also periodically invented new techniques to enhance the play way system and greatly encouraged the teachers to make use of the natural materials and their own imaginative thinking to achieve this goal.

Basic Education:-

Basic is something relating to or forming/ serving as a base or basis; fundamental. Basic education “(in India) means education in which all teaching is correlated with the learning of a craft” (www. Collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/English/ Basic Education).

Duffy felt that traditional and colonial forms of education were irrelevant and un-supportive, costly, abstract and useless for the ordinary masses. In his first village school in 1913, Duffy introduced the subject cultivation which suited to the needs of the district and the capacity of the pupils. It was important that the children should be better fitted to earn their livelihood in the fields later on. The agricultural side of the school was an immediate success and soon aroused keen interests among the parents. The people from the neighborhood also flocked in great numbers to see the experiments in the school. The attraction of such manual training was a greater one for the villagers than the mere book learning of reading and writing. (Brady Gerard, Thomas Gavan Duffy, pp.230-232). This personal and practical experience and its impact on the day today life of the people was a driving force for Duffy to extend this system ‘Basic Education’ later on to all mission schools long before the name was known in India (Michael Bosco, D., Souvenir for the twenty fifth death anniversary of Thomas Gavan Duffy, 1966, p.8).

Besides Gardening and Manual labour, Duffy had also included in his Basic Education, carpentry, ironwork, bricklaying, weaving, basket making, mat weaving and other rural local crafts. Thus basic education for Duffy was a part of education aiming at development of the all round personality of the pupils and make them to be rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future.

Self Governance method:-

Self governance means the exercising control or rule over oneself or itself. It also means of having the right or power of self-government; autonomous. (www. the freedictionary.com/self governance).

Duffy invented and introduced the self-governance education method in the Mission schools in order to train and form the future leaders of the oppressed community.

At every school, Duffy established a ‘Students’ Panchayat’. The Panchayat was headed by a head monitor and a group of Panchayatar. They were chosen for this Panchayat for a period of a month. There were twenty five other officers who were appointed with tenure of office for a week so that all might enjoy frequent terms of office. The object of this educational method was to establish order and to develop a sense of communal responsibility. Each function had its books of rules and privileges.

In this way by the frequent rotation of these offices the pupils were trained in a variety of useful occupations and were trained to value local institutions, to feel the need of order and to exercise authority- in other words they received grounding in the elements of enlightened communal living. "It is amazing, Duffy wrote, "how soon the students began to feel and exercise their power in the community, how promptly they played up the role committed to them and how universally they came to prefer the school to the jungle and the book to the bullock." (Brady Gerard, Thomas Gavan Duffy, pp.229-230). By this method, Duffy aimed at forming the leaders for the village community as well as for the nation.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method:-

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) means involving the rural masses to find out of information about problems, needs, and potential in a village and to help them to plan, to make decisions, and to take actions towards improving their own situations.

Duffy introduced the excursion to the village resources in his curriculum. During the excursion, the teachers' work must be mainly passive and the pupils must be encouraged to see things for themselves.

The following were a few things of common interest in the ordinary village for the participatory appraisal for the children: 1.A visit to an oil mill, 2. A smithy, 3.A carpenter's shop, 4. A cycle shop, 5.A common well, 6.A village fair, 7. A mountain, stream or lake or river, 8. A crow's nest, an ant hill or wasp's nest, 9. Post office, Panchayat office, 10. Observation of a well digging operation, 11. Making a note of the effects of a heavy rain or severe storm, 12. Observation of rainbow, and 13. Observation of crops and animal husbandry. This method of education made the children to involve themselves to observe and to acquire a practical knowledge from their own local resources. It also motivated the children to think about their obligation and responsibility to the growth and development of their village in future. (Gavan Duffy, T., Siruvarkalin Thozhan, 1919, p.34)

Duffian Methods of teaching and its significant impacts on Modern Education:-

Duffy was a paramount educationist who has the credit of founding, guiding and developing hundreds of Educational institutions in South India for over three decades. He evolved and explored his own innovative methods of teaching in his schools. Duffian methods of teaching had really made a great impact on the people in the presidency of Madras and it has been continuing its influence even on today's schools.

- ❖ By Correlation method, Duffy made the lesson relevant to one's life and made it practical and useful. This method is being used in many disciplines in all levels of education and found useful for gaining the comprehensive knowledge of the subject.
- ❖ Basic Education which included compulsory Gardening, manual labour and rural crafts aimed at the holistic development of the children and made them to be rooted to the soil. It had a place in the educational policy of the Government in India.
- ❖ Self Governance Education is a system of Students' Panchayat which had given importance to the achievement of Self discipline, Self esteem, and Self reliant education.
- ❖ Psychology is an essential element in education. Studying the Psychological bases of the child like the child's interests, aptitudes, natural faculties and limitations is much needed and indispensable even today.
- ❖ 'Excursion on Rural School' is very important to learn the historical, geographical and social and Natural resources of the place.
- ❖ The Activity based learning, though it was introduced at the beginning of 20th Century by Duffy, has resulted in the tremendous impact on Modern education.
- ❖ The play way method created a joyful and attractive atmosphere to the children. It was an effective and purposeful medium of educating the children. In modern education, the play way method is being used to make teaching and learning as conducive and congenial.

Conclusions:-

Duffian methods of teaching were very innovative, inspiring, attractive, relevant and useful. Having gained thorough knowledge of the place and people, searching a solution for the ever ending school question for the poor and responding to the needs of the hour, Duffy advocated, adopted and implemented the concrete methods of teaching for the poor and the downtrodden who were deprived of their right to education and life for centuries. The Concrete method of teaching helped the people to remember their poetic verses, arithmetic, songs or story or the event till

their life time. Some methods greatly encouraged them to involve themselves to find means for their life. On the whole, Duffian methods were of new explorations for the remote rural uncivilized masses for their upliftment in all walks of life.

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