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# Digest Version of "John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry: Foundations, Reception and Uses in Francophone Research in Education and Training"

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*This text is a brief summary of the following review paper published in French in the \*Revue Française de Pédagogie\* by Professors Joris Thievenaz and Michel Fabre :*

**Thievenaz, J. & Fabre, M. (2023). La Théorie de l'enquête de John Dewey : fondements, réception et usages dans la recherche francophone en éducation et formation. *Revue française de pédagogie*, 219, 129-178. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-pedagogie-2023-2-page-129.htm>**

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**Translation of the Original Review Paper Abstract:** John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry has, for more than twenty years, been the subject of renewed interest in the humanities and social sciences (SSS) and in particular in the field of education and training sciences (SEF). The works that invoke it are not content with a simple rereading or rediscovery of this central and emblematic concept of Dewey's theory of experience. They re-examine its origins, its nature and its potential in order to address the issues, issues and contemporary challenges that affect the world of education and training. This phenomenon of "return to inquiry" is, more fundamentally, part of an approach that analyzes the processes of learning, teaching, education, training or support in a renewed light by relying on a sufficiently robust and universal theory of experience. It is on the basis of these observations and the scientific issues that lead to them. This review paper examines the foundations of the Theory of Inquiry, its originality, its reception and the different types of contemporary uses that are made of it. The first part presents the genesis of the concept of inquiry and its progressive development in the philosophical and pedagogical trajectory of its author. A second part is devoted to the study of the reception of this approach in Francophone research in education and training. The third part presents the different interpretations and types of uses that are made of them as well as a certain number of epistemological questions on their interests and limitations. The aim is to show the richness and modernity of such a conception of experience, which for nearly a century has continued to enlighten, inspire and astonish.

**Keywords (TESE):** inquiry, education, training, experience, Educational Research

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## **Introduction**

### **Resurgence of Pragmatism and John Dewey's Role:**

Pragmatism has witnessed a significant revival in philosophical circles globally, rejuvenated by the influential works of thinkers such as Richard Rorty (1995), Hilary Putnam (1990), Donald Davidson (1993), Jürgen Habermas (2001, 2005), Axel Honneth (2015), and Hans Joas (1999, 2000, 2002). In the Francophone world, this revival of interest in John Dewey's thought is particularly noticeable through the extensive translations and scholarly commentaries devoted to his works. The pioneering contributions of Gérard Deledalle have been instrumental in this regard. Deledalle's translations of Dewey's "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry" (1967) and "Democracy and Education" (1983), along with his critical analysis in "The Idea of Experience in John Dewey's Philosophy" (1967), have significantly deepened the Francophone understanding of Dewey's philosophy.

### **Dewey's Philosophical Outreach:**

Since the early 2000s, there has been a marked increase in the publication of Dewey's seminal works and articles in French, facilitated by scholars such as Cometti (2010), Fabre (2015), and Madelrieux (2012, 2016). This scholarly activity reflects a robust interest in exploring and critiquing Dewey's comprehensive philosophical contributions, extending beyond his core works to encompass his views on political philosophy, social philosophy, and aesthetics.

### **Impact Across Multiple Disciplines:**

Dewey's philosophical reach has profoundly influenced a variety of disciplines. His political philosophy, for example, has been extensively discussed and expanded by scholars like Cometti (2016), Zask (2008, 2015), and Frega (2015, 2020). Similarly, his social philosophy has been significantly shaped by the rise of pragmatic sociology, with key contributions from figures like Karsenti & Quéré (2004), Bruno Latour (2012), and the collaborative works of Cefai, Bidet, Stavo-Debaugue, et al. (2015). Additionally, Dewey's insights into the philosophy of religion and aesthetics have been explored, as noted by Stavo-Debaugue (2016, 2018) and Shusterman (1992, 2001), among others.

### **Revitalization in Educational Thought:**

The rediscovery of Dewey's concept of inquiry, especially as articulated in "Logic. The Theory of Inquiry" (1938) has revitalized educational theory and practice, particularly within adult education and vocational training. This concept has prompted a re-examination of educational and training practices, encouraging a new perspective on the relationship between work activities and the construction of experience across a diverse array of professional fields. Scholars such as Alberio (2019c) and Thievenaz (2019a) have notably applied Dewey's theories to contemporary educational challenges, reflecting a broadened interest in his approach to experiential learning.

### **Contemporary Relevance of Dewey's Inquiry:**

Dewey's Theory of Inquiry today serves as a vital tool for rethinking educational practices. Its application across different contexts illustrates its adaptability and enduring relevance, which are continuously highlighted by ongoing scholarly debates and analyses. This sustained interest underlines the theory's utility in addressing lively questions within the discipline of Education and Training Sciences (SEF), facilitating a refreshed analysis of traditional and modern educational challenges.

## **Structure of the Analysis:**

The analysis is meticulously structured to first situate Dewey's philosophical and pedagogical thoughts within his contemporary cultural and educational context. It then progresses to explore the reception of his philosophy in Francophone educational research, particularly focusing on the contemporary uses and interpretations of the concept of inquiry. The final part of the analysis aims to discuss the contributions and limitations of these interpretations, providing a comprehensive critique of Dewey's lasting impact on educational thought.

## **Part one :**

### **Dewey's philosophical and pedagogical thoughts within his contemporary cultural and educational context**

#### **Historical and Cultural Context**

John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry, formulated in 1938, remains a focal point of scholarly interest more than eighty-five years after its publication. Understanding the development of this concept requires an exploration of the social, political, and scientific contexts of the era that shaped it. Dewey's formative years in Burlington, Vermont—a state known for its rural simplicity and the immigrant artisan community—profoundly influenced his philosophical and educational ideas. This environment, characterized by democratic values inherent in Congregationalist communities where leaders were elected by congregants, played a significant role in shaping his approach to democracy and education.

#### **Intellectual Foundations and Collaborations**

Dewey's academic work, enriched by his interactions with notable contemporaries like Charles Peirce and William James, positioned him at the heart of the pragmatism movement. His comprehensive body of work spans various domains including metaphysics, logic, morality, psychology, aesthetics, politics, and education. Noteworthy works such as "Experience and Nature" (1925), "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry" (1938), and "Democracy and Education" (1916) highlight his endeavor to blend educational theory with practical applications.

#### **Political Engagement and Global Influence**

Dewey was not just a philosopher but an active participant in the political landscape of his time, engaging in movements that sought to blend democratic ideals with practical governance. His efforts to establish a political party beyond the traditional Democratic and Republican lines, and his leadership roles in various humanist and labor movements, underscore his commitment to applying philosophical principles in real-world scenarios. Dewey's global influence extended through his lectures in China and Japan, his advisory roles in Turkey and the USSR, and his critical stance on educational practices in these regions.

#### **Critiques and Extensions of Deweyan Education**

Despite his significant contributions, Dewey's theories were not without criticism. The practical application of his educational theories, particularly in the USSR, revealed limitations when confronted with political ideologies that demanded more rigid educational frameworks. His pedagogical methods, while revolutionary, were critiqued for not sufficiently addressing the needs of forming politically or ideologically aligned individuals.

## Legacy and Continuing Impact

Dewey's philosophy of education, characterized by a focus on experiential learning and democratic engagement, left a lasting imprint on educational practices both in the United States and abroad. His ideas led to educational reforms that emphasized adaptability and student-centered learning environments, evident in the spread of new educational practices such as the use of mobile desks and the creation of Junior High Schools tailored to adolescent needs.

## John Dewey's Philosophy of Education and Pedagogy

John Dewey's extensive oeuvre traverses a multitude of themes—from democracy and public participation to artistic creation and the foundational habits underlying human behavior. Yet, at the heart of his diverse interests lies a profound commitment to education. This commitment is vividly expressed across several of his major works, such as "The School and Society" (1899), "How We Think" (1910), "Democracy and Education" (1916), and "Experience and Education" (1938). For Dewey, education was the quintessential philosophical problem, akin to the way Plato regarded it: life as continuous experience and learning, and philosophy's task to articulate the conditions for this experience to flourish optimally.

In his pivotal work, "Democracy and Education," Dewey outlines three fundamental functions of education: ensuring continuity between generations, adapting young people's experiences to align with the interests, values, and knowledge of their social group, and directing the growth of individuals who are inherently immature yet malleable. Dewey's view of malleability highlights the capacity to learn as a defining trait of youth, necessitating guidance.

Building on these functions, Dewey posits three core principles that underpin his philosophy of education:

1. **Education as Praxis:** Dewey sees education as a self-sustaining practice, an end in itself rather than a means to an external goal.
2. **Balanced Development:** He advocates for education to maintain a balance between personal development, cultural engagement, and social utility.
3. **Integration of Democracy and Education:** For Dewey, democracy is more than a political regime; it is a way of life that fosters the freest development of experiences, making the integration of democratic principles into education essential.

From the onset of his career, Dewey was deeply involved in pedagogy, as evidenced by his early "Creed" published in 1897 and his subsequent leadership in the Progressive Education movement that flourished in the United States from the 1890s through the interwar period. His innovative approach was crystallized in the operation of the "Lab School" at the University of Chicago, where he implemented and refined his educational theories. This school, initially termed the "Laboratory School," served as a testing ground for Dewey's pedagogical concepts, continuously adapting to the emergent challenges and insights gained from hands-on educational practice.

Dewey also critiqued traditional educational methodologies that separated effort from interest. He argued that active learning should integrate both elements, stemming naturally from the child's engagement with tasks that are intellectually stimulating and directly relevant. His famous advocacy for "learning by doing" emphasized moving from concrete experiences to abstract concepts in education, ensuring that learning activities are familiar, intelligent, and problem-oriented.

However, Dewey's innovative methods were not without their detractors and misunderstandings. In "Experience and Education," he addresses several misconceptions and criticizes both the rigid, test-based

pedagogies of his contemporaries and the overly idealistic approaches that failed to adequately integrate the educator's role and the curriculum into the learning process.

In summary, Dewey's contributions to educational philosophy and practice highlight his belief in an education system that is dynamically integrated with democratic values, one that emphasizes continuous, experiential learning tailored to the developmental needs of students. His work remains a cornerstone of progressive educational thought, advocating for a system that not only imparts knowledge but also actively engages students in the learning process.

## **John Dewey's Concept of Inquiry**

### **Historical Context and Evolution**

John Dewey's concept of inquiry has roots in ancient practices such as hunting, divinatory rituals, and medical diagnosis, which have been refined over centuries into more structured investigative methods in various fields by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This evolution was marked by significant advancements in medical practice (e.g., Broussais, Bichat), psychoanalysis (Freud), criminology (Bertillon), and art criticism (Morelli), paralleled by the development of the detective novel genre with authors like Poe, Conan Doyle, and Leroux. The formal theorization of this approach was further advanced by Charles Peirce and Dewey himself, emphasizing the role of inference from signs and the regulation of experience as central elements of inquiry.

### **Culmination and Definition in Dewey's Work**

Dewey's Theory of Inquiry represents the culmination of his interdisciplinary work, incorporating philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and political perspectives. Over his career, Dewey refined the terminology from "investigation" to "reflective thought" and "deliberation," finally settling on "inquiry" in 1938. These changes reflect his effort to avoid misinterpretations: he aimed to clarify that reflective thought is an active process intertwined with the activity itself and to show that scientific inquiry and everyday problem-solving are fundamentally similar processes. Both are based on a rational, controlled, and prolonged engagement with the environment, despite their different objectives.

### **Logical Framework and Philosophical Contributions**

In works such as "Studies in Logical Theory," "How We Think," and "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry," Dewey sought to establish a unified framework for inquiry across the natural sciences, humanities, and daily life. He positioned his concept of logic as distinct from and more applicable than traditional Aristotelian logic or the emerging logics of contemporaries like Frege, Russell, and Whitehead. Dewey's approach, which did not resonate well with some peers like Russell, revolves around understanding logic as an inquiry about inquiry itself. He envisioned it as a dynamic process that organizes and unifies experience while accommodating its inherent uncertainties and unpredictabilities.

### **Inquiry as a Method of Regulating Experience**

For Dewey, inquiry is not just a scientific method but a fundamental way of engaging with the world that allows individuals to order their experiences and make sense of the uncertain and unpredictable nature of reality. This perspective positions inquiry as essential for both scientific advancement and effective social and political intervention, underscoring its broad applicability and deep relevance in Dewey's philosophy.

## **Dewey's Conceptualization of Inquiry and Experience**

John Dewey, influenced by Darwin rather than Hegel whom he studied during his university days, transformed the concept of experience into a naturalistic framework. This shift redefined experience not as a metaphysical journey through history, but rather as the practical interactions of an organism with its surroundings. For Dewey, this interaction encompasses both the passive reception and active transformation of the environment, underscoring that knowledge is essentially a function of life, deeply entwined with the symbolic and the simulated aspects of human existence.

In Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, inquiry is an essential mechanism through which individuals engage with uncertain, obscure, or conflicting situations. He defines inquiry as a controlled and reflective act of thought, aiming to transform an indeterminate situation into one that is distinctly organized and unified. This transformation is crucial for turning a chaotic experience into a coherent whole, thereby restoring continuity, stability, and intelligibility to one's interaction with the environment.

Dewey articulates that the process of inquiry begins when typical, predictable experiences are disrupted by anomalies or disturbances. The investigative process that follows is not just about resolving these disturbances but is aimed at making the situation safer and more comprehensible. He notes that indeterminate situations, characterized by confusion and conflict, compel us to seek clarity and direction. The way out of such predicaments involves turning towards other, potentially enlightening situations that can provide clues for resolution.

Furthermore, Dewey outlines a structured approach to inquiry that involves several interconnected stages:

1. Identifying the background of uncertainty or doubt.
2. Formulating and defining the problem.
3. Developing potential solutions to the problem.
4. Engaging in reasoning to evaluate these solutions.
5. Applying and testing the solutions practically.

This approach to inquiry is not linear but is best understood as a series of overlapping cognitive functions that interact dynamically to guide the investigative process. This method, which Dewey describes as an anthropological function, demonstrates how living beings adapt and learn from their experiences by continuously interacting with and adapting to their environments.

Dewey's innovative view also introduces a crucial modification to traditional views of logic by incorporating temporality into the reasoning process. He argues that logical propositions, as they appear in an investigation, are provisional and not yet determined as true or false. Instead, they are under constant review—a process that continues until a resolution is reached at the conclusion of the inquiry. This perspective not only challenges the static nature of classical logic but also enriches the understanding of logic as a dynamic, temporal process deeply embedded in the context of human experiences.

In summary, John Dewey's theory of inquiry provides a profound framework for understanding the complex, often unpredictable nature of human experience. It emphasizes that intelligence and reasoning are not merely about replicating reality but about engaging with it in a manner that enhances our ability to navigate and make sense of the world.

### **Dewey's Dynamic Process of Inquiry**

John Dewey conceptualizes the investigation as a spiral process, a nuanced approach that integrates the construction of problems, the formulation of hypotheses, the development of their consequences, and their testing through observation or experimentation. This method is inherently dialectical, intertwining a dynamic interplay between facts and theoretical ideas. Dewey illustrates this with the example of a police



investigation, where the inquiry is guided both by a set of predefined criteria (such as motives and alibis) and by the emerging facts of the case. The integrity of the investigation, therefore, depends heavily on the framework within which it is conducted.

Dewey introduces the concept of a "cultural matrix of inquiry," which encompasses various paradigms of rationality and the practical genres of knowledge like philosophy, science, technology, and law. This matrix forms the scaffolding of the inquiry, assigning roles and statuses to its various elements such as rules, data, and potential solutions. Within this matrix, the inquiry process is not merely about finding answers but about navigating through and between these established frameworks, adapting and reacting as the investigation unfolds.

A significant aspect of Dewey's theory is its departure from classical logic. In Dewey's view, logical propositions within an investigation have only a provisional status—they are neither true nor false but are instead seen as problematic and under continuous review. This stance challenges the static nature of traditional logic, where propositions are often taken as definitive statements of fact. Dewey's approach introduces a critical temporal dimension to logic, suggesting that propositions are part of an ongoing process that may shift as the inquiry progresses.

This temporality is essential to understanding Dewey's second major innovation: the transformation of the logical copula. Instead of representing a static relationship, as in classical logic ("this is gold"), the copula in Dewey's logical framework captures the operations necessary to determine the truth of the proposition ("determining if this is indeed gold"). This approach acknowledges the iterative nature of thought processes, which often involve moving back and forth between hypothesizing potential solutions and reevaluating the problem based on new information.

These innovations by Dewey create what he describes as a "problematic space," a conceptual area within which propositions are examined and re-examined to ascertain their validity. This space is critical for moving towards the truth of any question or case, aiming to re-establish a continuity of experience through systematic problematization. Dewey views this method as reflective of the scientific process initiated by Galileo, emphasizing the importance of structured inquiry in both scientific endeavors and everyday problem-solving.

### **Foundational Aspects of Inquiry**

John Dewey's 1938 book formalizes the inquiry process as a universal model applicable to various existential situations where individuals encounter indeterminate circumstances. This process prompts sustained and attentive questioning, integral to the nature of inquiry itself, which Dewey defines as both a method of questioning and a means to seek answers. Initially inspired by the scientific research methodology, this approach is adaptable to numerous types of disturbances that require investigation to understand phenomena and resolve issues effectively. Inquiry, for Dewey, transcends mere action; it is fundamentally a philosophy of learning through active research and experimentation.

### **Contribution to Personal and Intellectual Growth**

Dewey posits that the inquiry not only addresses external problems but also contributes significantly to the personal growth and experiential development of the individual. Through engagement in the structured process of inquiry, a person—or more broadly, an organism—becomes a knowledgeable subject by participating in controlled investigative operations. This transformative experience enriches the individual's understanding and interaction with their environment, regardless of the context or the nature of the inquiry.

### **Extension to Cultural and Social Realms**

Dewey aimed to extend the inquiry framework beyond traditional domains to encompass broader cultural and social spheres, which he felt were still largely unexplored through this lens. In a modern world increasingly characterized by perpetual self-questioning—a condition amplified by complexities in societal structures and global interactions—Dewey saw the potential for inquiry to address issues obscured or distorted by ideological or religious dogmatism. He advocated for the application of inquiry in configuring socially relevant questions, often reshaped by media influence, to foster a more deliberative and participatory democratic environment.

### **Role of Inquiry in Social and Political Arenas**

The concept of social inquiry facilitates a politicization of issues that might otherwise be confined to technocratic solutions, paving the way for what Dewey and others view as an interactionist sociology. This approach encourages collaborative research between scholars and participants and supports a model of democracy deeply rooted in the Jeffersonian tradition of self-governance. Through social inquiry, communities can form "publics" that actively manage and respond to the broader implications of decisions and actions affecting them, advocating for a democratization of all societal spheres including family, work, and education.

Dewey underscores that inquiry is a lifelong learning process, essential for the continuous expansion of experience. He aligns this process with the foundational principles of democracy, which he interprets not merely as a governmental system but as a form of life conducive to the free and inclusive exchange of ideas. Democracy, in Dewey's view, is the optimal social condition for the flourishing of individual and collective experiences, facilitating a transition from a disconnected "Great Society" to a cohesive "Great Community."

### **Influence and Legacy**

The concept of inquiry represents a crucial juncture in Dewey's philosophical framework, intertwining logic, education, and politics to enhance the coherence of his overarching philosophy. This holistic view of human action and knowledge has had a profound influence on American philosophical, psychological, and educational thought, permeating even those at the University of Chicago who may not have directly engaged with Dewey's writings.

## **Dewey's Influence on American Educational Thought**

### **Dewey and the Progressive Education Movement**

John Dewey was a central figure in the Progressive Education movement that reshaped American pedagogy from 1890 to 1920. Although he was critical of certain aspects of the movement—particularly its tendency to diminish the roles of the teacher and the curriculum, and its anti-capitalist counter-conditioning—he remained influential in its development. The movement, as analyzed by Alix (2017), often constructed a straw man termed "traditional pedagogy," characterized by tensions between bourgeois distinction and democratization. Dewey's disciples, interpreting his idea of inquiry, also navigated within this educational current, adapting his concepts to broader pedagogical applications.

### **Kilpatrick and Pratt: Dewey's Disciples in Pedagogy**

William Heard Kilpatrick and Caroline Pratt, two of Dewey's closest disciples, sought to integrate democratic principles with experiential learning approaches in their pedagogical practices. Kilpatrick, influenced by Darwin and educational theorist Charles Degarmo, developed the "project method" in 1918, which emphasized that educational activities should align with children's personal goals and contribute to the social good, reflecting Dewey's view of democracy as a form of life permeating school environments.

Caroline Pratt's pedagogy, driven by her feminist beliefs and commitment to democracy, focused on play as a central educational method. She aimed to merge the expressive freedom advocated by the Romantic movement with the developmental stages outlined by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, promoting play as a means for children to explore real life and learn social and scientific truths.

Both Kilpatrick and Pratt advocated for educational environments free from rigid curricula, viewing them as constraints on children's potential and expressions of bureaucratic control. However, in his later work, "Experience and Education," Dewey himself cautioned against too much freedom, emphasizing the teacher's role in guiding the educational environment to ensure activities led to meaningful learning aligned with educational objectives.

### **Controversies and Misinterpretations**

Despite—or perhaps because of—his significant influence, Dewey's pedagogical theories have been associated with various educational reforms and crises in the United States, particularly during the mid-20th century. Critics have blamed Dewey's methods for perceived declines in educational standards and technological advancements compared to the USSR, especially during the Space Race and Cold War periods. Intellectuals like Hannah Arendt have critiqued these approaches, and such criticisms have fueled pedagogical debates and reforms internationally, notably in France during the 1980s.

### **Broader Impact on Adult Education**

Beyond K-12 education, Dewey's philosophical contributions have also significantly influenced adult education, promoting lifelong learning and democratic engagement as core educational principles. His emphasis on inquiry and experiential learning has encouraged educational approaches that value the active participation and development of adults in various learning contexts.

## **John Dewey's Enduring Influence on Educational Philosophy and Practice**

John Dewey, a seminal figure in Progressive Education, championed the integration of educational practices with real-life experience, profoundly shaping American educational thought from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Despite his association with Progressive Education, Dewey was often critical of some of its implementations, particularly those that de-emphasized the importance of teachers and curriculum or adopted a stance of opposition to capitalist societal structures.

### **Dewey's Disciples and Their Contributions**

Dewey's influence extended through his disciples, such as William Heard Kilpatrick and Caroline Pratt, who each adapted his educational theories to their unique pedagogical approaches. Kilpatrick's project method, inspired by Dewey's democratic ethos, focused on aligning educational activities with the personal goals of students while contributing to the social good. Caroline Pratt, emphasizing democracy as a way of life, infused her educational approach with elements of play, allowing children to explore and express themselves freely within a democratic learning environment. Both educators believed in the fluidity of educational structures, promoting a learning environment that was adaptable and responsive to the needs of students.

### **Lindeman and the Expansion of Adult Education**

The scope of Dewey's impact was not confined to child education. Eduard Lindeman, in his seminal work *The Meaning of Adult Education*, drew upon Dewey's theories to craft a vision for adult education that emphasized the centrality of life experiences as the foundation for learning. Lindeman's critique of traditional schooling, which he saw as merely preparatory rather than an integral part of life, echoed Dewey's advocacy for a learning process that was deeply embedded in the everyday lives and challenges of adults.

### **Contemporary Applications and Evolving Pedagogies**

In the latter half of the 20th century, figures like Malcolm Knowles and Jack Mezirow further developed Dewey's principles within the field of adult education. Knowles formalized the concept of andragogy, which prioritized self-directed learning and recognized the rich reservoir of experiences that adults bring to educational settings. Mezirow's transformative learning theory expanded on Dewey's ideas by emphasizing how adults can change their frames of reference through reflection, dialogue, and critical assessment, transforming their perspectives to better navigate life's complexities.

Donald Schön's work on reflective practice reinterpreted Dewey's ideas for professional and vocational training, highlighting the importance of 'reflection in action'—a method that allows professionals to adapt their knowledge and skills in real-time to meet the demands of various situations.

### **Criticisms and Educational Debates**

Despite their broad acceptance, Dewey's educational theories have not been without controversy. Critics have argued that the emphasis on experiential learning may have contributed to declines in traditional educational standards, particularly in the mid-20th century. This critique was part of broader debates about educational reforms and their impact on societal and technological advancements, reflecting ongoing challenges in balancing progressive educational practices with rigorous academic standards.

### **Partial Conclusion**

John Dewey's philosophy of education, with its focus on democracy, experience, and inquiry, has left a lasting mark on educational theory and practice. His ideas continue to resonate, advocating for an education system that views learning as a continuous, integral part of life rather than a preparatory phase. As educational paradigms continue to evolve, Dewey's work remains a critical reference point for discussions about how best to engage and educate learners in a rapidly changing world.

John Dewey's philosophy, particularly his ideas on education and training, experienced a varied reception in the French-speaking world, impacting multiple disciplines across humanities and social sciences. Here's a detailed narrative on how Dewey's thought has been interpreted and utilized in Francophone educational discourse over the decades:

## **Part two**

### **The Francophone Reception of Dewey's Educational Philosophy**

#### **Initial Reception and Historical Context**

Although John Dewey is now celebrated for his significant contributions to education and training, his work did not always enjoy widespread acclaim in French-speaking regions. During the post-war era until the 1990s, Dewey's influence was somewhat diffuse, often overshadowed by European philosophical trends and overshadowed by local educational theorists. The revival of interest in experiential learning among adults and the recent translations and republications of his seminal works have sparked what is now considered a "return to Dewey" in these regions.

#### **Challenges in Pragmatist Philosophy**

Dewey's pragmatism faced numerous challenges in gaining a foothold in Europe, particularly in France, where it was frequently misunderstood or caricatured. Critics like Durkheim dismissed it for its perceived utilitarianism and relativism, and even the Frankfurt School harbored reservations, with thinkers like Horkheimer and Marcuse expressing skepticism. Despite these criticisms, the resurgence of interest in pragmatism has sometimes been conflated with a more cynical "pragmatic" attitude prevalent in contemporary business practices, blurring the philosophical underpinnings of Dewey's work with broader cultural trends.

#### **Dewey and Progressive Education in France**

Dewey's impact was more pronounced within the Progressive Education movement, where he was recognized by leading educators like Cousinet, Ferrière, and Decroly. His ideas were disseminated through pedagogical journals and associations, such as the International League for New Education and the International Bureau of New Schools, up until the 1940s. Notably, educators like Freinet explicitly drew inspiration from Dewey, applying his principles to innovate school practices in France.

#### **Resurgence and Contemporary Application**

It wasn't until the late 1960s and beyond that Dewey's philosophy began to re-emerge as a significant influence in French pedagogical thought. Works like Piaget's "Psychology and Pedagogy" (1969) and Not's "The Pedagogies of Knowledge" (1979) referenced Dewey in the context of broader educational reforms. Despite this, Dewey's ideas were sometimes targeted by communist intellectuals during the Cold War, who critiqued his pedagogy as bourgeois and imperialist.

#### **Modern Interpretations and Pedagogical Innovations**

In more recent decades, Dewey's Theory of Inquiry has seen varied applications in educational settings. While early pedagogical movements in France, such as those influenced by Claparède and Decroly, did not explicitly use Dewey's concept of inquiry, later educational reforms in the 1970s began to incorporate inquiry-based approaches more directly. These included the "pedagogy of astonishment" and "awakening activities," which, while drawing on the ideas of thinkers like Piaget and Bachelard, also acknowledged Dewey's influence.

#### **Current Educational Landscape**

Today, Dewey's works such as "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry" and "Democracy and Education," initially overlooked upon their mid-20th-century French translations, have gained recognition and influence. Contemporary educational theories such as the Theory of Joint Action in Didactics (TACD) and the Problematization Learning Framework (PAC) reflect Dewey's enduring impact on the ways educational practices and philosophies are conceptualized and implemented in Francophone countries.

The journey of Dewey's educational philosophy in the French-speaking world illustrates a complex interplay of reception, rejection, and revival, showcasing the profound yet often contested influence of his ideas across different eras and educational paradigms. As his works continue to be studied and applied, Dewey's vision for education as a lifelong, experiential process remains a vital part of the global educational discourse.

### **A Re-reading of Dewey's Work in Education and Training Research Since 1990**

The late 20th century saw a revival of interest in John Dewey's ideas within educational sciences. Scholars like Renier (2014) and Dessberg (2008) have situated Dewey's philosophy within the history of education and pedagogy, while others have explored his influence on French educational thought (Riondet, 2013; Frelat-Kahn, 2016; Pudal, 2017). Moreover, researchers have applied Dewey's theoretical framework to address contemporary educational issues and to rethink the epistemology of school knowledge (Fabre, 1993, 1999; Charbonnier, 2013, 2015; Sensevy, 2013), as well as the structure of schooling and university education (Go, 2013; Point, 2020).

Significant studies have specifically utilized the notion of inquiry within educational contexts, both in schools and adult education. This includes the development of the Problematization Learning Framework (PLF), which challenges traditional empiricist teaching approaches (OHERIC sequence) and promotes a more investigative approach to science education, stressing hypothesis validation through functional activities like planting or breeding (Astolfi, 1992, 2008; Calmettes and Boilevin, 2014).

### **The Problematization Learning Framework (PLF)**

This framework has prompted a reevaluation of pedagogical approaches, emphasizing problematization over mere problem-solving. It integrates Dewey's inquiry-based perspective with the epistemologies of Bachelard and Popper's critical rationalism to enhance scientific learning. The PLF argues that the construction of problems is central to the scientific process, offering a richer, more complex learning experience than traditional models (Fabre, 1993; Orange, 1993).

### **Currents of Joint Action in Didactics (CJAD)**

Developed in the 1990s, the CJAD focuses on the interactive roles of teachers and students in the educational process, viewing teaching as a dynamic interaction where both parties collaborate to achieve educational goals (Sensevy, 2011, 2018). This approach redefines the didactic relationship, emphasizing the need for mutual engagement and joint action in the learning process.

### **The Current of "Social Inquiry" and "Problematization of Socially Pressing Issues"**

A significant aspect of the renewed interest in Dewey's work is the focus on "social inquiry" and addressing "socially pressing questions" that challenge contemporary societies. This strand of research is an extension of Dewey's political philosophy, notably within the educational frameworks aimed at civic education ("education to"), as outlined by scholars such as Barthes, Lange, and Tutiaux-Guillon (2017) and Simonneaux (2006, 2014). Dewey ([1927] 2010) emphasized the role of education in forming a politically aware citizenry, concerned with the significant effects of societal actions and decisions.

From an epistemological standpoint, Dewey likened social inquiry to medical diagnosis, wherein both aim to identify and remedy existential disorders (Zask, 2008, 2015; Stiegler, 2019). He argued against the technocratic ideal espoused by Lippmann, advocating instead for a democratic engagement where the

public takes an active role in addressing common issues. This approach encourages research that not only characterizes contemporary public problems but also develops methodologies for shaping future citizens.

Scholars have developed sociological models to describe the formation of a public consciousness around issues that stem from individual or collective disturbances (Emerson & Messinger, 2012; Spector and Kitsuse, 2012). These studies further explore the nature of socio-political challenges that could benefit from social inquiries, such as land use or climate change, which are marked by their complexity, conflict, and critical temporalities (Fabre, 2021, 2022). These issues often lack clear-cut solutions and require a nuanced understanding and innovative approaches to education and civic engagement.

The objective is to move towards a radical, deliberative, or participatory democracy, as envisioned by Dewey, where democracy is less about institutional knowledge and more about engaging citizens in the ongoing inquiry into social issues. The exploration of these complex social questions and their controversial nature is crucial for educating citizens capable of engaging in and contributing to a democratic society. This research direction aims to elucidate the processes through which education can help individuals navigate and influence the resolution of pressing societal issues, thereby enhancing democratic life (Chauvigné & Fabre, forthcoming).

### **The Design Thinking Approach**

Emerging from the brainstorming methods developed by Osborn in the 1950s and later by McKim and Rove, Design Thinking offers a creative, systematic approach to problem-solving that aligns closely with Dewey's inquiry method. It involves stages of empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing (Chanal & Merminod, 2019; Rove, 1991), focusing on a human-centered approach to design that is particularly popular in business and innovation sectors.

### **The "Experiential Learning" Trend**

In the realm of adult education, experiential learning emphasizes the role of the body, emotions, and social interactions in learning processes. This approach considers life itself as a continuous educational journey where experiences are transformed into personal knowledge (Pineau, 1977, 1992, 2000). Influenced by Dewey, it stresses the integration of theory and practice and views education as an ongoing, life-long process.

### **Partial Conclusion**

These diverse applications of Dewey's educational theories illustrate his enduring relevance in contemporary educational discourse. From the problematization of scientific learning to the innovative approaches of Design Thinking and the collaborative frameworks of CJAD, Dewey's influence continues to inspire educational thought and practice, highlighting his profound impact on the way we understand teaching and learning in today's complex and ever-evolving educational landscape.

### **Part three :**

### **Discovery of the Operational Nature of Inquiry in the Analysis of Activity in Adult Education Since the 2000s**

Since the late 1990s, the field of adult education has seen significant shifts due to the emergence of various currents and methods focused on the analysis of activity. These approaches, while diverse in their theoretical perspectives (Albero & Guérin, 2014; Thievenaz, 2023), share a common interest in the experiential dimension—viewing experience as both unique and context-specific. The primary emphasis across these studies is the interplay between activity, learning, and the construction of experience, illustrating a comprehensive engagement with John Dewey's psycho-philosophical concepts, especially his notion of inquiry (Barbier & Thievenaz, 2013; Mayen, 2009; Pastré, 2013).

## **Foundations in Dewey's Philosophy**

John Dewey's philosophy posits fundamental principles such as "growth in activity" and the "permanent reconstruction of experience," which underscore the ongoing development of the individual throughout their life (Dewey, 1937, [1920] 2014). Dewey challenges traditional dualisms like theory/practice and body/mind, advocating for a holistic view where education and work are not separate endeavors but interconnected aspects of life-long learning. This perspective is elaborated in his works, particularly in "Schools of To-Morrow" and "Democracy and Education," where he argues against the separation of vocational and cultural education and promotes an integrated approach to learning through industry and practical engagement (Dewey & Dewey, [1915] 1931; Dewey, [1916] 2011).

## **Application in Adult Education and the Workplace**

The integration of Dewey's concepts into adult education has revitalized the analysis of activity, focusing on how individuals learn and develop through work and beyond. This reevaluation of work as a site of intellectual and developmental activity supports a democratic vision of society, where each profession contributes not only economically but also to the personal growth of the individual. This framework has led to a redefinition of adult education, emphasizing continuous education and the potential of everyday environments—whether work, leisure, or culture—to contribute to personal and communal development (Dewey, [1920] 2014).

## **Current Research and Implications**

Contemporary research in adult education utilizes Dewey's Theory of Inquiry to explore and conceptualize how individuals learn and transform within work settings. This research addresses a broad range of scientific, social, and economic issues, with a particular focus on the experiential dimensions of work (Astier, 1999, 2004, 2009; Bourgeois, 2013). The aim is to understand the technical gestures, communicative exchanges, and cognitive processes involved in work activities that lead to new skill development and the transformation of habitual thought and action patterns.

This rich vein of inquiry not only underscores the relevance of Dewey's philosophical legacy but also demonstrates its practical applicability in addressing the complexities of modern adult education and workplace learning. The insights derived from these studies offer a profound understanding of the dynamic interplay between work and learning, highlighting the transformative potential of integrating Dewey's principles into contemporary educational practices.

## **Expanding Inquiry in Professional Activity Analysis**

In contemporary research, especially in the analysis of professional activities, the application of John Dewey's concept of inquiry has proven to be particularly insightful. This approach is geared towards a detailed observation of real work situations, employing methodologies such as direct observation, video recording, explicitation interviews, and self-confrontation techniques. The goal is to delve deeply into the types of tasks and professional gestures during which an individual re-elaborates their technical knowledge, transforms their work habits, or develops new skills.

## **Focus on Real Work Situations**

The analysis emphasizes the fine granularity of professional activity sequences, hypothesizing that these are moments where a reorganization of experience occurs. Researchers focus on instances of disruption or destabilization in an actor's activities to explore how, and under what conditions, the individual engages in an intellectual process akin to investigative activity. This theoretical framework helps identify key



moments such as the opening of an "intellectual parenthesis" in the work situation (Deledalle, 1967), the steps of reasoning involved, and the characteristics of these processes based on a "common inquiry pattern."

### **Inquiry's Impact on Professional Development**

The effects of this inquiry activity on professional learning and development are significant. Following Dewey's assertion that "inquiries penetrate every aspect of life" ([1938] 1967), research explores the conditions, dynamics, and outcomes of inquiry both at work and in the work of inquiry itself. This has broad implications across various sectors.

### **Application in the Health Sector**

The health sector, in particular, has seen fruitful application of the inquiry concept, especially in studying on-the-job learning among healthcare providers and the diagnostic processes that accompany their care activities (Thievenaz, 2012a through 2019b). Research has also extended to new professions such as psychomotor therapists (Paggetti, 2019) and emergency nurses (Kedidah-Chair, 2022), exploring their professional activities through the lens of inquiry.

### **Broader Applications**

The concept of inquiry is increasingly applied to other fields such as physical, sports, and artistic activities (APSA), where it helps analyze activities like beginner sailing instruction (Zeitler, 2003, 2011) or physical education teachers' mediation activities (Cauvin & Récopé, 2017). Even the creative arts and pedagogical advising work are being investigated through this theoretical approach, highlighting its versatility and depth in understanding complex professional interactions and learning processes (Thievenaz & Thélin-Métello, 2021; Boucenna, 2015).

### **Analysis in Educational Settings**

In the educational sector, inquiry principles are utilized to enhance understanding of teaching activities. This includes analyzing interactions with internship tutors and exploring the dynamics within teaching that drive educational processes (Renier, 2013b; Müller and Lussi Borer, 2018).

Overall, the adoption of Dewey's inquiry framework across these diverse fields not only enriches the understanding of professional activities but also contributes significantly to the discourse on adult education and professional development. By focusing on the transformative effects of inquiry within professional settings, researchers are able to provide deeper insights into the continuous development of skills and knowledge in various professional contexts.

## **Epistemological Reflection and Analytical Tools in Adult Education Through Dewey's Inquiry**

The Theory of Inquiry, pioneered by John Dewey, offers a comprehensive experiential paradigm that is deeply influential in the field of adult education. This paradigm includes notional, theoretical, and paradigmatic elements that facilitate a profound engagement with human activity in its contextual and ecological dimensions. In adult education, Dewey's framework is frequently used to scrutinize, reassess, and potentially revise traditional models, frameworks, or analytical tools used in research.

### **Reexamining Established Analytical Frameworks**

Dewey's philosophy encourages a continual reassessment of accepted norms within any field, prompting adult education researchers to critically evaluate the epistemological foundations of their discipline. This process involves distancing from established analytical frameworks to explore new conceptual elaborations. For instance, Albero & Brassac (2013) propose a praxeological approach that views knowledge and intervention activities on a continuum between episteme (theoretical knowledge) and praxis (practical application), sparking debates about the distinctive characteristics of Education and Training Sciences (ESS) as a discipline (Albero, 2019a, 2019b).

### **Dewey's Theory of Experience**

Further enriching this discourse, other scholars use Dewey's theory of experience to explore the term 'experience' which pervades both scientific and social discourse. Barbier (2013) discusses this in depth, while Bourgeois (2010, 2011, 2013) differentiates between "experimenting" (an active component of experience where the subject acts upon the environment) and "experiencing" (a more passive dimension where the subject is conscious of what happens to them in their environment). Dewey's integration of these dimensions highlights their mutual dependence and applicability to educational and pedagogical contexts.

### **Inquiry as a Resource for Designing Educational Tools and Environments**

In the domain of adult education, the application of Dewey's inquiry goes beyond theoretical analysis to include the design of educational tools, programs, and training pathways. This practical application aims at creating environments conducive to investigative activity, thereby enhancing learners' professional capacities.

### **Collaborative Inquiry for Professional Development**

For example, Muller and Lussi Borer (2016) at the University of Geneva have developed frameworks based on "collaborative inquiry," utilizing traces of filmed activities and work experiences. Similarly, Piot (2017) leverages the inquiry concept as a pedagogical tool to support adults distant from employment, fostering situations that enhance reflexivity.

### **Inquiry in Research Training and Self-Evaluation**

Additionally, the concept of inquiry serves as a valuable resource for research training in academic settings (Renier & Guillaumin, 2017) and for critiquing self-evaluation systems (Saussez & Allal, 2007). At a meso-level, it is applied to study training devices and pathways that emphasize reflexivity (Saussez, Ewen & Girard, 2001), highlighting its utility in a range of educational contexts.

These varied applications of Dewey's inquiry demonstrate its versatility and functional relevance in adult education, emphasizing its role in transforming theoretical insight into actionable teaching and learning strategies. This approach not only adheres to Deweyan pragmatism but also actively explores its potential effects, uses, and applications, ensuring that educational practices are continuously evolving and responding to the complexities of adult learning needs.

## **Contemporary Reevaluation of Dewey's Theory of Inquiry: Bridging Theory and Practice in Modern Education**

More than eight decades after its publication in the United States and over half a century since its French translation, John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry is experiencing a remarkable resurgence of interest. This revival is driven by a pressing need to revisit urgent issues spanning various educational fields through robust concepts, while integrating contributions of pragmatism revitalized by sustained editorial and cultural

activity. Nonetheless, this "return to inquiry" raises questions about the applications of the term and the limits and explorations it entails.

The allure of Dewey's thoughts unveils certain unquestioned elements, boundaries, and points of caution that merit clarification. Like any concept or theoretical framework that undergoes rediscovery or reinterpretation in contexts divergent from its original formulation, and for purposes other than those its author originally intended, contemporary applications of inquiry invite scrutiny. This fascination with Dewey's philosophy reveals several unexamined assumptions and limitations that require elucidation.

Contemporary applications of inquiry often exist in the tension observed within our scientific community between episteme and praxis. On one side, there are works aimed at generating scientific knowledge through the prism of the inquiry concept, and on the other, more operational uses focused on educational and training actions. These divergent uses reflect two perspectives on research in the Sciences of Education and Training, reviving long-standing debates about whether research should solely pursue comprehensive and analytical aims or also focus on developing practical tools and recommendations for application. This dichotomy raises traditional critiques where the former approach is sometimes seen as detached from the realities of practitioners in the field, while the latter may be viewed as misusing theoretical knowledge not intended for such purposes.

Through the lens of inquiry, old questions about the utility of science, the scientific rigor of models used, and the feasibility of detaching from certain aspects of a theory to consider its operationalization or further development are revisited. One way to navigate this complexity is to return to a principle Dewey held dear: the rejection of sterile dualisms that constrain thought.

Arguing against the dichotomy of theory and practice, it is equally inappropriate to confine inquiry strictly to one realm or the other, but rather to consider their coexistence. It's crucial to recognize that Dewey did not aim to establish a finalized and closed theory but to "open a path for a logic of experience that meets the needs of the world and of modern science. It offers a hypothesis. It is up to researchers — to all researchers, not just logicians —

engaged in anthropological inquiry, to experiment with it" (Deledalle, 1967, p. 9). Thus, researchers are encouraged to adopt this theoretical framework with a tripartite vigilance: 1) ensuring fidelity and precision to avoid distorting the author's original ideas; 2) addressing contemporary social needs or issues; 3) debating or even deviating from certain propositions to keep the theoretical approach vibrant and flexible rather than dogmatic or stagnant.

Several points of caution or necessary precautions seem attached to the possibility of invoking the concept of inquiry in educational and training research. Like any theoretically elaborated lexicon used for research or intervention purposes, it is crucial to avoid several pitfalls: 1) naturalizing the concept, which could lead to attempts to "identify," "observe," or "trigger" an inquiry, thus reifying human activities based on theoretical characteristics; 2) confining oneself to a formal or strictly applicative reading of the inquiry schema, which could lead to rigid compartmentalization within what is essentially an open, transposable, and evolving approach; 3) diluting the principles embedded in this theoretical approach to experience, leading to interpretations that render everything as inquiry and thus emptying the concept of its substance and uniqueness; 4) valorizing or instrumentalizing the concept, turning it into a marketing tool, an evaluative category, or a "theoretical seller."

Observing that the Theory of Inquiry is neither presented as a purely theoretical approach nor as a completely finalized model "ready to use," but rather as a hypothesis to be tested with awareness of potential risks and pitfalls, it is necessary to establish benchmarks and safeguards. This involves avoiding an opportunistic attitude that might invoke the concept of inquiry simply to reference Dewey, potentially leading to misinterpretations or diluting his philosophy. Viewing the concept of inquiry as a "tool" to be

"crafted" for research implies questioning the conditions of its appropriation and the "precautions of use" that accompany it. In particular, determining the conditions under which it is feasible to interpret human action (in work situations, training, or the private sphere) without succumbing to the temptation to "see inquiries everywhere" or to deploy this concept-tool indiscriminately and in all contexts. While providing a definitive and absolute answer to such a question may be challenging, it is possible to propose three types of minimum conditions or criteria that suggest the presence of an investigative process in the situation under study:

1. The subject(s) in a situation must encounter a disturbance creating a discontinuity in their experience, as discussed earlier. The Theory of Inquiry hinges on the principle that an "intellectual parenthesis" opens when a subject faces an uncertain, doubtful, conflictual, or problematic situation that disrupts the normal course of events.
2. The disturbance must lead to an active suspension of judgment, necessitating not just the presence of a problem but its acknowledgment by the subject, thus delaying automatic responses and allowing time for a reevaluation of situation-based strategies.
3. The process must involve a synthesis of situational information and conceptual knowledge, linking data gathered from the environment with theoretical insights to generate and test hypotheses.

These conditions, supplemented by the "biological" and "cultural" matrices Dewey describes, provide a robust framework for deploying the concept of inquiry thoughtfully and effectively in research on education and training.

#### **A theory that can only be understood or mobilized in relation to the author's other productions.**

John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry, a culmination of his philosophical evolution over half a century, must be understood within the broader context of his extensive body of work. Dewey, who began his academic journey with his first book, *Psychology* in 1887, and culminated with *Logic* in 1938, continuously evolved his thoughts through more than forty publications. His theory represents a mature integration of diverse intellectual, philosophical, and political elements, addressing various social and scientific questions while consistently focusing on the nature of experience (Deledalle, 1967).

Dewey's aim was not merely to provide a scientific method but to apply the process of inquiry to all aspects of social and cultural life, challenging unexamined moral dogmas and authoritative arguments. His approach to inquiry informs not only scientific methodology but also ethical judgment and political engagement, treating these as intertwined processes within a democratic way of life (Dewey, 1932; Dewey, 1927). Furthermore, Dewey's work resists categorization into a single academic discipline. He criticized the compartmentalization of knowledge, arguing for an interdisciplinary approach where philosophy, psychology, and political science enrich one another. This integrative perspective means that understanding Dewey's concept of inquiry requires consideration of its applications across multiple domains of thought and practice (Dewey, 1938).

Thus, Dewey's Theory of Inquiry is not just an academic theory but a comprehensive philosophical stance that underpins a democratic ethos. It suggests that inquiry is fundamental to a democratic society, fostering an environment where individuals can participate equally, and institutions can adapt through continuous interaction. Dewey envisioned democracy not merely as a governmental system but as a way of shared life and communal experience, emphasizing that his philosophical contributions should enhance understanding and practice within this broad, experiential context (Dewey, 1916).

## **General Conclusion**

John Dewey's Theory of Inquiry is pivotal, serving as the logical cornerstone connecting all facets of his philosophical output. This theory articulates the advancement of knowledge through problematization and experimentation across varied domains—scientific, professional, and daily life. It also shapes ethical judgments by clarifying value conflicts and moral dilemmas and underpins the democratic process, enabling publics to address socio-political challenges. The reception and evolution of Inquiry Theory within Francophone research in education and training have been complex. It has sometimes been overshadowed by other Deweyan themes like experiential learning, but at times it has critically influenced educational theories and research methodologies.

Notably, the application of Inquiry Theory has oscillated between broad generalizations and specific interpretations. Initially devised akin to Galileo's experimental method, it has been adapted to support a broader reflexivity linked to lifelong experiential learning. This expansive application has sometimes extended beyond Dewey's original scope, attempting to encapsulate existential dimensions slightly overlooked in his 1938 work, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. It suggests a version of inquiry that not only reflects on action but integrates seamlessly into continuous activity, potentially diluting its rigorous investigative essence into mere reflective practice. This broadening, though it aims to transcend the dichotomy between theory and practice (a Deweyan objective), risks reducing the investigative process to just another aspect of ongoing activity. Modern research seeks to refine the conceptualization of inquiry, emphasizing problem construction and the discontinuity of experience, aligning it more closely with scientific methodologies. This is evident in vocational didactics, which tailor inquiry to the specific traits of professional practices.

Interpretations of Dewey's inquiry vary, especially in educational settings, focusing alternately on problem-solving or problem construction. This reflects broader debates about the role of education—whether it should prioritize understanding or action, an integration Dewey himself maintained. A significant tension in applying the Theory of Inquiry lies in balancing cognitive processes with conceptual depth. Dewey envisioned inquiry as universally applicable, from scientific research to everyday reasoning, stressing cognitive mechanisms over epistemological depth. This approach, while inclusive, sometimes neglects the nuanced conceptual demands of different types of inquiry, such as those in medicine or law, which require specific interpretative frameworks and knowledge bases.

Emerging research trends, such as Design Thinking, adopt a creatively broad application of inquiry, potentially at the expense of depth. In contrast, educational and vocational problematization efforts, and approaches to socially sensitive issues, emphasize the detailed epistemological characteristics of specific problems. Thus, while Dewey's Theory of Inquiry continues to inspire a broad spectrum of educational and training research, its adaptability also invites a diversity of interpretations that can both enrich and potentially dilute its original profundity. The challenge remains to harness this heuristic potential without losing the depth and specificity that give it substantive educational and social value.

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