

## The Curriculum Creators – Part 4

The man called the Father of Progressive Education had a very curious background.

Dr. Dennis L. Cuddy wrote in a *The Christian News* article entitled, “The Conditioning of America” that the “conditioning of modern American society began with John Dewey, a psychologist, a Fabian Socialist [who] used the psychology developed in Leipzig by Wilhelm Wundt, and believed that through a stimulus-response approach (like Pavlov) students could be conditioned for a new social order.”

Dewey’s attachment to Fabian Socialism is interesting because the main pursuit of the Fabians was the gradual advance of socialism around the world, including the United States.

It is further interesting that Dewey would be a devotee of Wundt, who believed, as Charlotte Iserbyt, a former Department of Education change agent, wrote in her book, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*, “that man is an animal, that his actions are actually always reactions, and that he can be studied in the laboratory in much the same way as an animal might be studied.”

Here we have Dewey embracing two philosophies that regard human beings as little more than an animal that can be trained to elicit a predictable response, like holding a treat before your dog and commanding him to shake hands.

How loving.

Then, too, we have Dewey’s University of Chicago sidekick, Benjamin Bloom, who gave us the revered taxonomy—which all teachers utilize in the making of lesson plans—and the concept of mastery learning.

Iserbyt states that Bloom believed “the purpose of education is to change the thoughts, actions and feelings of students.”

Really. I thought education was about *teaching* students.

In 1896, the University of Chicago Press published Dewey’s *Psychology*.

Iserbyt writes: “This was the first American textbook on the ‘revised’ subject of education. *Psychology* would become the most widely-read and quoted textbook used in schools of education in this country. Just prior to the publication of his landmark book, Dewey had joined the faculty of the Rockefeller-endowed University of Chicago as head of the combined departments of philosophy, psychology and pedagogy (teaching). In that same year, 1895, the university allocated \$1,000 to establish a laboratory in which Dewey could apply psychological principles and experimental techniques to the study of learning. The laboratory opened in January 1896 as the Dewey School, later to become known as The University of Chicago Laboratory School.

“Dewey thought of the school as a place,” writes Iserbyt, quoting Ida B. DePencier’s *The History of the Laboratory Schools*, “where his theories of education could be put into practice, tested, and scientifically evaluated....”

“Dewey . . . sought to apply the doctrines of experience and experiment to everyday life and, hence, to education . . . seeking via this model institution to pave the way for the “schools of the future.” There he had put into actual practice three of the revolutionary beliefs he had culled from the new psychology: that to put the child in possession of his fullest talents, education should be active rather than passive; that to prepare the child for a democratic society, the school should be social rather than individualist; and that to enable the child to think creatively, experimentation rather than imitation should be encouraged.”

This rhetoric may sound wonderful, but it's code for the process of molding a child into nothing more than a cog whose value is based not on the uniqueness of the individual, but what the group assesses the individual's worth is relative to the importance his or her contribution has to the success, perhaps the survival, of the collective or, rather, The State.