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## EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF FRANCIS BACON

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“If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content, to begin with, doubts, he shall end in certainties”

-Sir Francis Bacon

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### Abstract

Sir Francis Bacon, the father of English essays is remembered in the classroom due to his wonderful contributions to the educational thoughts. His empiricism and philosophical works are the examples of his greatest contribution towards the education. Bacon is the most important force in the development of new scientific knowledge. He took Aristotle's ideas and argues for an inductive or scientific method which could be the basement for new scientific knowledge. The main aspects of Bacon's philosophies are

- Promote a new scientific knowledge rather than ancient scholastic knowledge.
- Critique of Idols - revolutionized the way of man's thinking towards the world.
- Focused on Inductive method which starts from specific to universal conclusion.

Francis Bacon, the ancient, religious or metaphysical character of knowledge was replaced by the objectivity of experimental and science. Science came as an search of an end which seems to be a domination of man over nature. Bacon's desire is to promote a new scientific knowledge rather than ancient scholastic knowledge, was shared by educators, philosophers, statesmen during his life time. He says that it would be available for all children if school took responsibility for ensuring the spreading of new scientific knowledge.

**Key words:** Philosophy of Education, Inductive method, Idols.

### Introduction

When we come to know about Bacon's life and his struggled life path the understanding of his ideas would become more fascinating. He was born on 22, January, 1561 in London. He was a younger son of Sir Nicholas Bacon and his wife Lady Anne Bacon. He completed his studies in Trinity College, Cambridge in December 1575. He further continued his studies in Law at Gray's Inne. Finally Bacon became a successful English scientist and a lawyer. He had been seen as an important figure in the Renaissance and Scientific enlightenment.

He was so interested in science, philosophy and politics. His favorite philosopher was a friend of King James I and the Duke of Buckingham. He took his power in the House of Commons in 1584 as a representative of a small village.

Then he was appointed as a Lord Chancellor (1616), Lord Guardian (1617), under James I. His name was accused by corruption, so parliament deprived him from the position. He was sentenced by a fine and imprisonment in the Tower of London. But Bacon never abandoned his intellectual life.

Bacon's educational philosophy focuses on the importance of a scientific training which is an important element of intellectual development for human being. Science comprises the ideas and it is an essential factor to clarify reality by human being. Bacon had become the main propagator of modern science which helps the people to discuss on scientific knowledge. Thus, Bacon's philosophical objectives help to discuss under educational thoughts.

Educational theorists say that though his work does not deal with pedagogical problems in particular, it is necessary to consider the educative characters in Bacon's work and the presence of sciences in contemporary education. Bacon in his essay *Of Studies* talks about the power of education. In the essay *Of Studies* he says that the study activity brings enjoyment and enhances one's thinking, speaking, writing ability which adds charm to their personality.

"studies serves for delight, for ornament and for ability"

-Bacon, 1973, P.85

### **Bacon's Thought on Education**

The title of the *Novum Organum* published in the year 1620, which is a contradictory work of Aristotle, whom Bacon had called "a detestable sophist". There were more theological ideas and methods were prevailed before Bacon. He says "men until now, have been little and very superficially dedicated to experience, but they have devoted an infinite amount of time to ingenious meditations and Ramblings". In this he compared medieval theologian and logicians to spiders. He says that the spiders could wove beautiful webs of knowledge, admirable for the delicacy of the thread, but without content or purpose. Finally he comes to the conclusion that the inductive empirical method could help man to dominate nature. Thus to promote the revolutionized knowledge reformation, he says

"gave a new order to sciences, he proposed distinction between reason and faith in order to not falling into religious prejudices which distort comprehension of reality"

(GADOTTI, 2005, P.76)

Bacon's essays mostly deal with education, civil and moral subjects which convey the truth of human experiences. In his essays we can find the fusion of the authoritative ideas which derived from the literary classics. His essays focus on the study of intellectual beauty of the readers. His essays got the web of expression of "fulfilled, unfulfilled aspirations, personal failure and faults and the realization of dreams and humanity. His literary works are meant to help, educate the humanity and also deal with physical, mental and moral aspects of human life. Alexander Pope in his book *An Essay on Man* praised Bacon as

"The wisest, the brightest and the meanest of mankind" (ALEXANDER POPE, 1733, P.281).

Bacon longed to overcome the scholastic knowledge because they did not provide any necessary scientific knowledge for mankind. In *new Organon Aphorism*, Bacon talks about his thought of knowledge.

“The discoveries which have hitherto been made in the sciences are such as lie close to vulgar notions, scarcely beneath the surface. In order to penetrate into the inner and further recesses of nature, it is necessary that both notions and axioms be derived from things by a more sure and guarded way, and that a method of intellectual operation be introduced altogether better and more certain”(BACON,2013,P.20).

Bacon thought that man's senses are flawless and it produced the valid knowledge when it guided by the scientific method. According to Bacon Bacon science is a tool for a new knowledge which could be a well progress of human being. So he comes to the conclusion that power over nature and knowledge over nature gives peculiar mind towards the man.

OBSERVATION----INVESTIGATION---EXPERIMENTATION

MASTERY OVER NATURE (A KNOWLEDGABLE MAN)

Classification of knowledge in various fields:

Bacon believed that knowledge is a tool to dominate nature, which needs to be classified based on human capability. He founded a subjective scientific knowledge which should be customized according to pedagogical term, a curriculum for the teaching of systemized knowledge. For him poetry is a tool for getting knowledge by experience of imagination or creativity, history is like getting knowledge by the experience of memory. In this natural history is a knowledge that gathered by the record of events of physical world over time. By civil history man gets knowledge on human civilization. The term Philosophy refers the knowledge that took up by the experience of reason. Bacon says that science of man deals with the rational knowledge of human being, and also the knowledge of individual's physical which deals with human psychology. On the other hand “physical knowledge” is a knowledge of the natural causes. Hart in his book Personalities of Historia says

“To understand the world, it should be before observed. First one should collect the facts, said Bacon, and then take the conclusions of these facts by means of inductive reasoning. Although scientists have followed closely the inductive method of Bacon, the general idea in it printed - the crucial importance of observation and experimentation”.

(Hart, 2001,P.503)

Bacon's Induction method examine a negative and at the same time positive too. Firstly the obstacles should be removed from the mind in the way of the knowledge of the truth. And on the next, the method should build the real models for the interpretation of nature. Thus the inductive method proposed two approaches, the first one is named as “The Idols of Criticism” and the second is “The Boards of Discovery or Research”. According to Bacon these methodological steps should guide the intellect of the human being to achieve the appropriation of reality. In the book Man and the Nature and The Renaissance Debus praise Bacon as

“The vision of Bacon of the scientific method was, essentially: experimental, qualitative and of inductive”.

( Debus,2002, P.102)

BACON AND HIS FOUR IDEALS OF THE MIND:

E.O. Wilson says on his book The Refiguring of Early Modern Thought as

“Among the Enlightenment founders, his spirit is the one that most endures. It informs us across four centuries that we must understand nature both around us and within ourselves, in order to set humanity on the course of self-improvement”-(Wilson,p.15)

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Wilson praised Bacon as “the father of Induction” who truly grasp the pure reasons of Inductive approach. Bacon broke down the rigid ways for understanding knowledge based on experiments to prove their theories. Bacon clearly understood that scientific knowledge should comes up with understanding rather than reasoning. In his book *Novum Organum* he describes the errors of human understanding of knowledge. He classified the human fallacies of his time under four headings which he called idols. He distinguished them as Idols of the Tribe, Idols of the Cave, Idols of the Marketplace, and Idols of the Theater. From the four idols, Francis Bacon detract from self evaluation and actualization, which prevent human from his full potential and from becoming better people and achieving true understanding.

**Idols of the Tribe:** Idols of the tribe is an error caused by the human being which already inherent in human. It is an natural tendency for an error which made false assumption and makes their own thinking as the ‘correct one’. Bacon calls it as ‘false mirror’ which bend the true nature of thinking.

**Idols of the cave:** Idols of the cave refers to the intellectual problems of the individuals. It also involves their passion, ideologies and likeness which lead them to misunderstand the true nature of things. The mind tend to be overly influenced by their likings which could spoil the imagination.

**Idols of the marketplace:** Idols of the marketplace refers to the errors where language is responsible. It is a problem of ‘political discourse’. In early period human being used to interact only with other human being who lived in an huge market place. The interaction and imperfection of language usage divert the human mind from the truth.

**Idols of the theatre:** Bacon described them as ‘Idols which have immigrated into men’s minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration’. Bacon referred it as to long-received wisdom, the ancient systems of philosophy. Without emptying one’s mind of the old ways, there will be no new progress could be made.

Thus Bacon says that the truth is a belief that affixes the mind to thinking and acting. Bacon finally realized that the creative story telling helps to engage the learners mind. Bacon says that education should be designed that gives the observation and also the true knowledge. The education should be an activity to find out correct and false or invalid knowledge which shape the human spirit and find the true scientific knowledge.

### **Conclusion:**

Bacon revolutionized the way man relates to the world. Myths were banished and scientific truth was revealed. He opposed the speculative tradition of his day and says that nature represented the foundation for intellectual life. Bacon’s educational thought formed a critical consciousness of man. He demystified the reality and he proposed a foundation for modern science as he says that The end our institution is the knowledge of the causes and secrets of the movements of things and the expansion of the limits of the human empire in the realization of all things that are possible.

He expects universities and researchers should foresee the ideas through scientific knowledge. For him the research study should be discussed towards the phenomena of nature to get a balance between practice and knowledge and also for ‘a productive kind of knowledge in the school education’. He considered education as science which is an search for an end. His

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intention was to replace the accidentalism, the one which is already planned. His desire is to reorganize of human knowledge not based on scholastic knowledge but on scientific knowledge.

Bacon's speculative ideas influenced all areas of knowledge and his ideas seems to be the product of reflection. From this article we can understand that the study of modern science and modern methods will not be complete without understanding the importance of Sir Francis Bacon.

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