

Significace of progressive education for the teaching of young children



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Progressive Education emphasises the learner as the centre of education and take into consideration more the needs and capabilities of the child himself rather than the teacher's. Learning here is based on the intelligence of the child where creativity, imagination and thinking are promoted. Progressive education did not begin at a specific date but increased in the twentieth century especially in central Europe, Germany, Scandinavia and North America (Darling & Nordenbo, n. d)

John Dewey is the father of progressive education and he talks a lot about progressive education in his works such as in *The School and Society* (1900), and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902). He argued that learning has to be based on themes which are applicable within the society the children are living (Chambliss, 1996). In my opinion these themes are very important as these will also help children to form their character and opinions as like John Locke believed, from young age the first thing important thing in education is the formation of the character such as the way you carry yourself, virtue and qualities of personality.

Also the educator has to promote differentiated learning in the classroom. Differentiated learning in schools is very important where the teacher break different task according to the child she's going to work with and not promote the same task to all the children, where some of them will not even understand what is happening. But unfortunately, like Dewey argues the majority of the educators' only worries about the teaching of subjects and ignore the individuality and self-expression of the child. In Dewey's view this is not good as the teacher has to focus on important themes and problems to

help the child form and play a dynamic role in the society he's living (Chambliss, 1996).

Dewey defines education with a simple definition, that education is growth. For him education must be open ended and for this to happen growth needs not to be restricted by anything. This depends on how good the environment is therefore the teacher has to create this environment where the child can grow. In my opinion the environment is a very important factor to educate children. The environment created should have aspects that are related to the social life where the children can experiment and learn on their own but like Friedrich Froebel believed it has to promote practical activities and creativity as this enhances play art and craft work where children can experiment (Darling & Nordenbo, n. d).

Like Dewey believed problems are not solved without experiments. Like Dewey, Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that environment is an important aspect for learning as we grow naturally, and then we grow through interaction with our physical environment, and then interaction with our human environment. Like Dewey, he also says that the tutor has to create the environment in a manner which encourages learning and motivates the child and where the child can experiment, in fact in his book Emile we can see that Emile's tutor provided an environment where after a few days a problem was faced. With this environment the tutor of Emile tried to teach Emile the meaning of justice by after letting him grow crops in the garden, he found everything destroyed as the gardener had planted crops in the same place before him. I think this way of educating children is a very good way.

Even simple things can educate children in a way that they will help them in <https://assignbuster.com/significance-of-progressive-education-for-the-teaching-of-young-children/>

their life. For example if there are two children playing in the classroom where only one ball is provided and they both want it, although not directly the children will learn that they cannot have everything they want in their life but they have to wait and learn to be patience.

In the above episode mentioned of Emile and in the example I gave of the ball, there is a problematic situation faced by the child which will not only help the child to learn what is justice or what is patience but also to think. Dewey believed this too and saw the importance of problem solving approach even in society and believed that democratic society works in an experimental way. Dewey says that schools have to be organized with everyday life problems so that the child himself will be prepared for everyday life in society. They will also be prepared to face a problematic situation in their life and solves these problematic situations encountered when socializing and living with others (Darling & Nordenbo, n. d).

Dewey believed that the way we grow is in communication with each other. On the contrary, although Rousseau influenced Dewey and talks about progressive education and that learning has to be child centred, Rousseau didn't believe that growth will grow by communication and we can see this too in his book Emile. In this book, he talks about raising a boy by taking him out of society and having him raised alone with a tutor in a one to one relationship. In a way I don't agree with Rousseau but I agree a lot with Dewey. I think that a child can benefit a lot by communicating with others. First of all everyone has his own opinion therefore if for example a child is talking in a group where he faces people with different opinions than his, he will learn to accept other opinions. He will learn to analyse his own opinion <https://assignbuster.com/significance-of-progressive-education-for-the-teaching-of-young-children/>

and others and see what is the best because in society this child will meet a lot of people that have different opinions than his. Also hearing different ideas and experiences that other people have will teach you more things therefore I think that communication can help a child a lot to fit in society. But Rousseau's idea is different as in the book Emile will not meet other people but will be raised up alone with few anonymous servants and his tutor, therefore there is no place for too much communication except with his own tutor.

Emile influenced Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi who talked about education from his experience as an educator and a father. Although he was influenced by Rousseau, Rousseau himself, talks about education outside the school while Pestalozzi argues that children have to learn with other children in a school environment (Darling & Nordenbo, n. d). He says that educators should read out, find out, discover and then try to educate in the classroom but they have to modify things according to the individual child and then reflect on their practice. I agree a lot with this as not every child has the same development and talents.

Froebel says that the child already has the talents to develop into what they are going to be when they are going to grow up all the educator have to do is just organise an environment and the child will grow in this environment The idea is that educators should leave the child growing naturally and should not interfere with the development of the child. I agree with Froebel's idea that children are born with talents but these talents will vanish if no one stimulates them and help them grow. On the contrary Locke believed that we are born with an empty mind and that it starts forming through the senses.
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All round development of the child should be the educator focal point and not simply think about developing academic subjects. Intellectual qualities such as physical and emotional development are more important than academic subjects. I think its better that children from young age develop their character and skills that will help them in their social life. Traditional teachers don't agree with this. Like Dewey believed the material traditional teachers try to teach is not based on the present life experience the child is experiencing (Bingham, 2009). Unfortunately I think that now days in primary and secondary schools more traditional education is promoted in Malta and not progressive education. This also is happening in some kindergarten schools. When I was doing teaching practice in a particular school, I was with 4 year old children. The teacher was not educating children with themes or taking every child as an individual, but she was trying to teach them addition and subtraction and when I asked her why she told me that if they go to year one class not knowing addition and subtraction the teacher will complain therefore all she was doing was preparing them for academic subjects. After I saw this a question I had in mind was when are they going to express themselves, experiment, be creative, form their character, learn things that make it easier for them to face society in the future and learn to survive?

Dewey argues that everybody needs to learn to survive and the first thing that educators have to teach children is to survive. This is very important according to Dewey as when life becomes very complex it is not easy to survive and live in our complex societies therefore the educators have to introduce life skills to live in a social environment (Chambliss, 1996).

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Progressive education is a good way for children to be educated as individuality is a very important factor. It's not running after time to learn an academic subject but taking every child as an individual, taking his own time to be educated, and develop his character, ideas, talents etc to find his place in society in the future.

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