

Progressivism has its beginnings as an educational philosophy according to Man's (as cited in Coloma, 2013, p. 644) review of Cremin's (1961) seminal work "Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957", which gives Cremin credit for tracing the "origins of educational reform in the progressive era." He relates, "Cremin identified the decades closely following the end of the civil war in the United States as the starting point continuing through the birth of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the First World War." Man further asserts, "Cremin's work outlines the impact of Progressivism on the developing teaching profession of the time, schools and colleges and the decline of the movement post World War II." Cremin, as referenced by Kridel (2013), cautions against the attempt to form a definition for Progressivism, stating, "None exists, and none ever will; for throughout its history progressive education meant different things to different people, and these differences were only compounded by the remarkable diversity of American Education (1961, p.X)."

Early theorists influencing the movement included Parker, Thorndike, and Dewey. Schmitt (2010) references, "John Dewey deemed Colonel Parker, as much as any single person might be, 'the father of progressive education' (Dewey, 1930, p. 204)." Parker of the Chicago Normal School was credited with the first student lead assembly program commended as an innovative approach for allowing students to control the content and delivery of information disseminated during the morning exercise. The progressive practice for its time was counted as the precursor to what became a daily ritual in many schools throughout the world.

Labaree (2004) summarized the development of the relationship between education and the Progressivism theory as the meeting of purpose and opportunity that arose from a backlash from higher education to the drill and practice education methods defining education of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. Labaree (2004) identified the division in value systems between the leading progressivism theorists. Those advocating for administrative progressive change and the pedagogical leaders, who sought to reshape school curriculums. Labaree (2004) declared the administrative progressive theorist as the winners based on the development of education over the past century.

Characterizing progressivism has been attempted by many. Weshah (2013) in a Jordanian study of a teacher education student's ability to articulate educational philosophies, identified a connection between prospective teachers' articulation of an educational philosophy that supports their personal belief system and their educational practices. A significant number of students who were able to articulate their philosophies identified as progressive upon reflection of their values, beliefs and attitudes.

Curriculum development, aligned with the progressivism philosophy, abounded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the development of child-centered programs to vocational schools to socially conscious programming. Moore (2000) observed the English progressivism movement's anti-social view of curricular development as a rejection of the social categories: "Whereas the positivists, essentially, want to get society out of knowledge, the progressives, fundamentally, want to get society out of the child (Moore, p. 20)." Those who acknowledge the possible negative aspect of progressivism point to its alignment to the political (Cunningham, 2002). By the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many educational programs were under pressure to provide a standards-based, socially conforming answer to what the next century would require of its members.

The progressivism philosophy can be seen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape in programs that support challenge-based learning like Estad's "Do Learn Program" based in Newport Beach,

California. Utilizing real life business models to immerse students in the school's curriculum in a project-based learning model, this innovative model is based upon an approach made popular by Apple (Estad, nd).

A report of pre-service STEM teachers completed by Barak (2013), designed to test student's attitudes and perceptions of the effectiveness of information and communication technologies (ICT's), found an earlier divide in the student groups' actual belief in the practical benefits of ICT's for progressive education practices and the later groups' acceptance and perceptions. Over a six-year span from 2006-2012, utilizing a mix-method design model collecting qualitative and quantitative data, two cohorts were surveyed and asked to draw renderings of their vision of a class utilizing ICT's (Barak, 2013). The 2006 cohort, while stating support for ICT's use in the curriculum, in the surveys, drawings showed reservation, and in many instances, represented it as a distraction to learning. The 2012 cohort statements supporting the use of ICT's were more aligned with their respective drawings, showing a change in perception in the beneficial use of ICT's in a progressive curriculum based education program (Barak, 2013).

A local version of an educational program built on the concepts of progressivism is the Hudson County School of Technology located in North Bergen, NJ. This award-winning program was designed as a child-centered, student-directed learning site with small student to staff ratio. This innovative school which opened in 1991 has sustained a quality program over the past 25 years. In a turn to the past as a route to the future, Prothero (2016) reported in an Education Week article on the resurgence of "Micro" schools in the educational arena. These one-room school programs may prove to be an alternative to traditional and private school options that are starting to gather momentum around the country. With a concentration on the use

of technology, multi-grades learning in one class, and project-based learning, micro schools have strong progressive elements. The progressivism education movement, not discounting the valid concerns of its effectiveness, continues to offer an answer to those educators whose philosophy requires the desire to provide innovative curriculum approaches which employ a child-centered outcome.

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