

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 459

PS 022 103

AUTHOR DuCharme, Catherine C.  
 TITLE Historical Roots of the Project Approach in the United States: 1850-1930.  
 PUB DATE 12 Nov 93  
 NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Anaheim, CA, November 10-13, 1993).  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; \*Curriculum Development; \*Early Childhood Education; \*Educational History; \*Educational Philosophy; Kindergarten; Laboratory Schools; Social History; \*Student Projects; \*Teaching Methods; Teaching Models; United States History  
 IDENTIFIERS Dewey (John); Froebel (Friedrich); Hall (G Stanley); James (William); Parker (Francis)

ABSTRACT

This paper contends that the historical roots of the project approach in the United States can give strength to early childhood educators today, offering insight and models for the implementation of child-oriented curriculum. The project approach to teaching and learning evolved as a result of the educational ideas of Friedrich Froebel, William James, G. Stanley Hall, Francis Wayland Parker, John Dewey, and William Heard Kilpatrick in the 19th- and early 20th-century. Froebel maintained that the purpose of school is to enable children to become cooperative and helpful in living, that the root of the educative process lies within the child's instincts and spontaneous activities rather than in the presentation of external material, and that the school is a mini-community reflecting the larger, matured society. The ideas of Froebel, James, Hall, Parker, Dewey, Kilpatrick and others are discussed in detail, especially in their relation to the kindergarten movement, the nature study movement, the Herbartian movement, and the laboratory schools movement in the 19th- and early 20th-century. Contains 58 references. (MDM)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*



it fails to produce miraculous remedies. There is no need to have so little confidence in our educational past. American education has been rich in imaginative innovations" (Wirth, 1966, p. viii).

The historical roots of the project approach in the United States can give strength to early childhood educators today offering insight and models for implementing a child-oriented emerging curriculum.

The project approach to teaching and learning evolved as a result of the educational ideas of Friedrich Froebel, William James, G. Stanley Hall, Francis Wayland Parker, John Dewey, and William Heard Kilpatrick. The kindergarten movement, the nature study movement, the new psychology, the child study movement, the Herbartian movement, and the laboratory schools movement all contributed to the emergence of "new schools" during the period 1890-1930.

### Froebelian Ideas

Froebel "inspired a new understanding of children's activities and ways of learning, and directed attention to their need for manifold experiences if they are to arrive at awareness of themselves and their world" (Lilley, 1967, p. 2). According to Froebel:

"The great aim and end of the whole enterprise [the kindergarten] is the education of a person from the earliest years through his own doing, feeling, and thinking and in conformity with his own nature and relationships so that his life is an integrated whole" (Froebel, 1840, quoted in Lilley, 1967, p. 118-119).

Froebel insisted that activity was central to the educative process:

"All existence and therefore all observation and knowledge begin in action. True education must originate in activity and must similarly be both instructive and creative and must provide for climax and consolidation in the creative process. Living, doing, knowing - these are coincidental, however different the emphasis may be at any one time" (Froebel, 1828, quoted in Lilley, 1967, p. 43).

Seeking support for his kindergarten, Froebel wrote:

"Let us learn from our children. Let us attend to the knowledge which their lives gently urge upon us and listen to the quiet demands of their hearts. Let us live for our children; then will their lives bring us

joy and peace, and we shall ourselves begin to grow into wisdom.

"Come, let us live for our children. Clear thought always seeks to

reveal itself in action, and the practical application of our resolution

to express life in all its aspects and to live for our children is an

institution which will promote family life and educate the nation and

all mankind. It will do this by encouraging the child's impulse to

activity, investigation and creative work. It will be an institution

where children instruct and educate themselves and where they develop

and integrate all their abilities through play, which is creative

self-activity and spontaneous self-instruction. We have in mind

primarily families and schools for the care of little children,

but our appeal refers also to primary and elementary schools and indeed to every person who aims at full and complete development. Already many families in Germany, Switzerland, and North American have joined in accomplishing the ideals expressed in this appeal" (Froebel, quoted in Lilley, 1967, p. 92-93).

Froebelianism maintained that: 1) the primary purpose of school is to enable children to become cooperative and helpful in living; 2) the root of the educative process lies *within* the child's instincts and spontaneous activities rather than in the presentation of external material; 3) the school is a mini-community reflecting the larger, maturer society (Dewey, 1900).

### The Kindergarten Movement

The first kindergartens were private enrichment centers for well-to-do families and soon kindergartens supported by philanthropists were established for children of poverty (Committee of Nineteen, 1924; Shapiro, 1983). By 1880, about 400 kindergartens existed in thirty states; the kindergarten had become firmly established in the United States (Ross, 1976; Vandewalker, 1907). In San Francisco alone, the kindergartens grew from one free kindergarten in 1878 to forty three in 1888 (Smith, 1888, p. 712). Kindergarten reports and exhibits were common at professional meetings of the National Educational Association. The exhibits in the late 1800s consisted of kindergarten work as exemplified in the gifts and occupations invented by Froebel. Nora A. Smith (1888) reported on the kindergarten

exhibits at the National Educational Association:

"The occupations shown in the Chicago exhibit were: Sewing, weaving, clay and card-board modeling, drawing, folding, pin-sticking tablets, stick inventions, and number-work in beads. The kindergartners had made a specialty of useful charts. For instance, one card illustrated weaving, - the spider in one corner, the spinning-wheel in another, strips of cloth interwoven in another, and finally the Kindergarten mat. Another chart was on "uses of Flowers," and another, "To Create Sympathy with Flowers." There were peas in bottles at one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven days, and six, seven and eight weeks, showing growth from seed to fruit. There was much excellent ground-work, one piece showing a complete farm-yard, with animals, framing implements, etc. The number lessons in beads and sticks were very well worked out, and the whole exhibit showed a definite and thoughtful purpose" (p. 710-711).

Miss Smith's reports also includes a description of the San Francisco Primary Schools:

"San Francisco showed kindergarten work from forth primary schools. Much of this was well done, and is certainly a step in the right direction as a relief from the wariness of first steps in reading and writing. The principal occupations here again were sewing, weaving, and folding" (Smith, 1888, p. 711).

Differences Among Froebelians. In 1890, Anna E. Bryan of Louisville, Kentucky, delivered a paper titled "The Letter Killeth" at the Annual Session of the National Educational Association in which she cautioned kindergartners about the danger of implementing Froebel's pedagogy without reflection and an emphasis of the spirit of his educational laws:

"Because of the complete and comprehensive arrangement of materials Froebel has given as a system, there is great danger and temptation of mistaking the schools of work and the mathematical sequence in gift-work as a prescribed, formal line of teaching, instead of tools to be skillfully and discriminately used" (Bryan, 1890, p. 575).

The report of the Kindergarten exhibits in 1891 at the NEA held in Toronto reveals that the work of the kindergarten and elementary grades displayed from the LaPorte Schools of Indiana as described by Professor and Mrs. Hailmann included "groups of work evincing the prescribed as well as spontaneous work of children in each grade" (Newcombe, 1891, p. 52).

The movement to accept the spirit of Froebel and to creatively interpret his ideals of self-activity and development continued to gain a stronghold amongst educationists. Many papers delivered at the NEA advocated more spontaneity and sensitivity to the present needs of children (Cropsey, 1891; Frederickson, 1891; Hill, 1904).

Kindergarten Influence on the Primary Schools. Prior to the development of the kindergarten in the United States, the primary schools were places where:

"Formal instruction was the rule and the repression of childish activity the established form of procedure...The free expression of the children's ideas by means of clay-modeling, paper-cutting, or painting was unknown in school work. The need of physical activity in the form of play and games, and the value of contact with nature, were also unrecognized. The teachers having the least training and experience were placed in charge of the youngest children and paid the lowest salaries. Such was the primary school in the early seventies, when the kindergarten came" (Vandewalker, 1907, p. 117-118).

At the National Educational Association meeting in 1894, Froebelian influence on the primary grades was mentioned:

"The live primary teacher of today has her eyes and her ears open. She has felt the broadening influence of Froebel's thought. The live kindergartner of today knows that it is quite possible to sacrifice the kindergarten spirit to the letter; and that Froebel did not say the last word" (Hinckley, 1894, p. 704).

Froebel's disciples believed that the educative process should begin when the child was three or four years old. They believed the kindergarten should resemble the home allowing the children to engage in the daily occupations of society at large in cooperation with their peers (Bowen, 1897). Emphasis was placed on manipulating objects, self-expression, exploration, and discovery as paths to learning (Ross, 1976). Froebel's writings influenced American educationists and highlighted the importance of play, activity and

interest in the learning process (Vandewalker, 1908; Ross, 1976).

The leaders of the kindergarten movement "proclaimed a new gospel - that of man as a creative being, and education as a process of self-expression. They substituted activity for the prevailing repression; and insisted upon the child's right to himself and to happiness during the educational process" (Vandewalker, 1908, p. 1-2).

"The kindergarten embodied a new ideal of education; it implied a different attitude toward childhood; it utilized for the child's development means other than the traditional ones; it employed different methods of procedure. The application of kindergarten principles to primary school practice means nothing less, therefore, than the reorganization of the school - the reconstruction of its ideals, the enrichment of its curriculum, the adoption of new and different methods" (Vandewalker, 1908, p. 211).

Miss Emma C. Davis, delivered a paper titled "The Ideal Primary Curriculum" in which she stated:

"Now, the aim of this new education, as even its opponents are fain to admit, is to base the work of the child upon his own experiences, to lead him to gather data for thought from his personal observation, and to inspire him to interpret these experiences and observations independently and originally, to relate them with each other and with all previously gained knowledge, and to apply them to the interests and acts of his daily life...It is Froebel, above all

others, to whom we owe the inspiration of this new education"

(Davis, 1894, p. 730-731).

Nina Vandewalker, one of the first to write a history of the kindergarten movement in America, described the influence of the movement on the traditional primary grades:

"In spite of the slowness of its adoption by the school, however, the kindergarten was making itself felt, even in those communities that never adopted it as such. Kindergarten song books found their way to primary teachers' desks; plants and pictures appeared in schoolroom windows and on schoolroom walls; and the presence of scissors, folding papers, sewing cards and modeling clay was pointed to as evidence that "the kindergarten was being introduced". School board and superintendents were delighted to have the primary teachers assume the kindergarten manner, and learn something of "kindergarten methods". Little progress has been made in the establishment of kindergartens at public expense," said Dr. Harris towards the end of the decade, "nevertheless the system has had a marked effect in improving the methods in the primary grades." (Vandewalker, 1908, p. 186).

### The Nature Study Movement

The growth of science courses in the colleges and universities caused great concern among society's leaders as it became clear that students had not been adequately prepared the early years with a foundation in basic scientific concepts. Therefore, courses of study

appeared for the elementary grades that allowed for experiences with nature which was assumed to enhance the children's powers of observation (Vandewalker, 1907). Early issues of American Childhood, the journal of the International Kindergarten Union, contains many articles on projects related to nature study. Many cities founded public gardens as well. The kindergarten activities related to the care and observation of living plants and animals, upon gardening, and field excursions to view nature at work were incorporated into the courses of study for young children.

### The Herbartian Movement

Herbartianism became a major international educational movement between 1865 to 1905 (Dunkel, 1970). Herbart stressed the development of character as the ultimate aim of education. He also stressed the importance of experience and relating background experience to learning something new. Herbart did not agree with faculty psychologists of his time; he developed the theory of apperception that assumed the mind to be a structure that was continually changing due to experiences. Herbart conceived of an educational program that would use objects as did Pestalozzi to go from whole to part, but in addition he pursued ways to relate those objects in a broad sense so that there would be an alternation of *immersion* and *reflection*.

Herbartianism as it became known contained little of Herbart's initial writings and teachings. The popular form of Herbartianism that influenced the American educational leaders from 1865 to 1905 consisted mostly of the extension and application of Herbart's ideas by Professor Tuiskon Ziller and Professor William Rein. Ziller developed the theory

of concentration and the culture epoch theory. These theories influenced the way subject matter was presented to many children in the "new schools" in America. The theory of concentration allowed for all the school subjects to be "concentrated" on a particular theme so as to become more integrative in presentation. The culture epoch theory assumed that each child in his development from infancy to manhood passes through the same general stages that the race has passed through in its rise from savagery to civilization. The curriculum was then designed to be in congruence to the stage of the children's development and it was believed that the child would be naturally interested in studying about the particular time in the history of the growth of civilization. Rein extended Herbart's idea of the four steps of instruction. Rein described five steps of formal teaching: 1) preparation; 2) presentation; 3) association; 4) system; 5) application. Rein and Ziller both directed laboratory schools in Europe where they tested their ideas in practice.

#### Froebelian and Herbartian Influences: The Pedagogy of Francis W. Parker

Francis W. Parker has been called the father of Progressivism by John Dewey (Cuban, 1984). G. Stanley Hall though elementary education in America owed more to him during the 1880s and 1890s than to any other person (Curti, 1963). Colonel Francis Parker began teaching at the age of 16; it was then, as a teacher of the young, that he began to work out his educational philosophy in a practical way. He left teaching when the Civil War began; he fought proudly and became a Colonel. After the War he and his wife moved to Ohio where he took a job as a Principal. When Parker's wife died suddenly, he decided to go abroad to the University of Berlin. He pursued graduate study in philosophy and

pedagogy there for three years (Cuban, 1984).

Upon returning to America in 1875, Parker accepted the invitation of School Board President Charles Francis Adams to become Superintendent of the Quincy Schools. Within five years, the Quincy Schools had gained national acclaim for their innovative methods although Parker always insisted it was not a method but a *search* for a natural method of teaching (Tanner & Tanner, 1980). In 1883 Parker left Quincy, Massachusetts to become Principal of the Cook County Normal and Practice School for almost twenty years. In 1899, Mrs. Emmons Blaine gave him one million dollars to establish a private institute to train teachers. In 1901, he retreated from the public school system and the political pressures of the School Board to direct the teacher training institute affiliated with the University of Chicago. He remained in this position for one year until his death in 1902 (Rugg, 1936).

Parker's professional activities were extremely influential; kindergarten and primary teachers regularly attended his summer institutes. Parker spoke to teachers often. He was described as a thoroughgoing nonconformist, intense and even vehement while at the same time tender and intuitive in his love and understanding of children (Curti, 1963). His critics called him "naive" in his faith in the goodness of human nature. He was devoted to a democratic education for a democratic nation and he was a man of action continually attempting to find ways that the child would be the center of all education.

Parker's pedagogy was his unique blend of his own teaching experiences and the European influence from the writings of Froebel, Pestalozzi, and Herbart. Although sporadic ideas of Froebelianism, Pestalozzianism, and Herbartianism are visible in Parker's pedagogy, it is equally apparent that these ideas have been restructured to fit a democratic

society. Parker's pedagogy was published in 1894 in a book titled Talks on Pedagogics: An Outline of the Theory of Concentration. Parker believed, as did Froebel,<sup>1</sup> that education was the exploration, the discovery, and the apperception of the divine pattern of the universe. He believed that through self-activity and cooperation children were to have a chance to experience the joy of discovering truth. Parker was influenced by Pestalozzi and used object teaching methods although his form of object teaching was bit modified. In his theory of concentration he suggested central subjects of study similar to the Herbartian principle of concentration and correlation. Parker believed that all other subjects could be learned within the context of the central subject. Reading, writing, spelling and math were integrated in the central subjects.

Parker believed that all education is by self-effort; the two fundamental modes of self-effort are attention and expression. He emphasized that attention and expression must be united in teaching. Parker defined three modes of attention as : 1)observation, 2) hearing/language, 3) reading. The nine modes of expression were 1)gesture, 2) voice, 3) speech, 4) music, 5) making, 6) modeling, 7) painting, 8) drawing, 9) writing (Parker, 1894/1937).

"To kindergartners he preached the gospel - "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," and gave his loyal support and encouragement to any bold spirits who had the courage to break with traditional practice, applying Froebel's principles in better forms" (Hill, 1925, p. 486).

#### The Child Study Movement and The New Psychology

The psychology of G. Stanley Hall, William James, and John Dewey provided a

scientific base for the new schools which advocated purposeful activity for the development of the child. "Frederick Burk dedicated the records of his experiments in the Santa Barbara, California kindergartens to Dr. G. Stanley Hall as follows: To G. Stanley Hall, whose researches in child psychology are giving to the intuitions of Froebel scientific bases and selective critique" (Hill, 1942).

G. Stanley Hall has been called the Father of the Child Study Movement. Hall's goal, although he never reached it, was to scientifically state the child's natural development according to age. Hall elevated the child to a new plane of importance. Through the use of the questionnaire method, the nature of the child was investigated; his feelings, hobbies and habits were catalogued in "scientific" categories. Hall studied all aspects of the child including the physical health, mental health, and psychological or behavioral aspects of child development and education (Ross, 1972). The results of the research as well as his strong belief in individualism caused Hall to advocate that the curriculum should be designed about the "true needs of the pupil as they were revealed by child study (Curti, 1963). He abhorred mass methods of instruction.

In 1895, G. Stanley Hall, William Burnham, Anna Bryan, and Patty Smith Hill collaborated on research in the search for the "ideal scheme of education for child welfare in early life" (Hill, 1942). Many of the kindergartners were not ready to accept the idea that Anna Bryan had put forth in her address, "The Letter Killeth"; they supported the views of Susan Blow and advocated for a literal interpretation of Froebel despite the new research studies centered on child growth and development.

Like, G. Stanley Hall, William James was an individualist. He rejected

standardization and the "automation" theory. He coined the phrase of educating the *whole* child. Although he valued child study, he did not think it necessary for every teacher to fill notebooks with observations and statistics (James, 1901).

William James lectured on the new psychology which viewed the child's mind as an organism rather than the old faculty psychology. It is estimated that nine out of ten of the teachers that studies psychology at all in the years between 1890 and 1910 read James (Curti, 1963).

In Talks to Teachers James applied the principles of the new psychology to education and teaching. He saw education as forming useful habits in the individual; in this belief he was very much within the contemporary mainstream of thought and a product of his times. James still believed that school should be repellent and that teachers must seize opportune moments to instill the useful habits.

James talked about the association of ideas and how teachers must help students to connect learning by associating experiences and objects to be learned. He refuted the notion of mental discipline and formal verbalistic training in schools. James thought *interest* was the motive power of all educational progress. Due to his influence and popularity many teachers were introduced to the notion of educating the whole child and the idea of the child as a behaving organism motivated by interest.

A close friend of Parker's and a student of James, Dewey championed pioneer work in both pedagogy and psychology.

In the field of psychology, Dewey followed the lead of James' new psychology which assumed that the human being was a dynamic whole organism - emotions and intellect

interconnected. Dewey proposed that human growth and development was the natural result of experience and self-activity (Archambault, 1964). Dewey recognized that the mind is conditioned by social institutions; therefore, he insisted that the complete psychological act was a social act (Rugg, 1947). His new psychology was not only dynamic and integrated, it was also both *individual* and *social* and it emphasized the behavior of human being rather than physiology. Although Dewey had studied philosophy in Europe and no doubt had been influenced by various European scholars and philosophers, his "psychology of the act" was clearly a unique conglomerate of ideas that had not simply been imported to American soil.

Dewey and Parker enjoyed each other as friends while sharing an interest in pedagogy. Unlike Parker, Dewey had a rare ability to suspend himself from his own contemporary culture to perceive the broad overall relationships between school and society; he was in this way a prophet. He founded the first laboratory school at the University of Chicago in 1896 to conduct designed experiments upon a sound theory of human behavior and society (Dewey, 1900).

The guiding principle of Dewey's pedagogy was "mental growth through intelligent action" (Rugg, 1947, p. 548). He believed the aim of education was to produce intelligent, reflective citizens capable of living and participating successfully in a democratic society. He refuted the popular notion that school was a "holding tank" until children became adults and challenged the idea of school as life. He designed the laboratory school to be conducive to mental growth by 1) allowing children to live, to investigate, and experiment; 2) allowing children to choose school experiences according to their changing interest,

attitudes, and capacities; and 3) allowing children opportunities to solve problems through reading, writing, figuring and constructing.

Dewey (1897) in the University Record wrote:

"As regards the spirit of the School, the chief object is to secure a free and informal community life in which each child will feel that he has a share and his own work to do...the emphasis in the School upon various forms of practical and constructive activity give ample opportunity for appealing to the child's social sense and to his regard for thorough and honest work" (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, p. 32).

Dewey accepted many of Froebel's educational principles. For example, Froebel named four primary activities that reveal the "nature and needs of the child and condition his development: namely, the talking, the playing, the investigating, and the drawing impulses, through the functioning of which physical, intellectual, and moral control takes place" (Mills, 1907, p. 107).

The Dewey School curriculum consisted of the occupations and three intellectual strands: social studies, sciences, and communication/expression. "Dewey had argued that where the child is concerned there are four basic impulses on which to build: 1) the social impulse, rooted in the need to communicate something about a social situation, 2) the constructive, 3) the investigative, and 4) the expressive (with the latter two growing out of the first two)" (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936, p. 336-337).

"The occupations were used as springboards for opening lines of intellectual inquiry, but in addition, products were created. The

children did useful work, grew carrots and lettuce in the garden, and with them made salads to be eaten at lunch. They constructed racks to hold the bicycles they rode to school. They build a clubhouse in which they held discussion groups and special interest activities. The occupations brought the children together in task-oriented groups, and they were designed deliberately to form the kinds of habits and values Dewey judged to be need in the metropolitan culture. Children were to gain a sense of cooperative human effort required to met the needs for living. Intellectually, they were to gain insight into the complex procedure of processing basic materials and into scientific principles and techniques" (Wirth, 1966, p. 290-291).

By establishing the laboratory school, Dewey spread the idea of adjusting school to child life and development. Many visitors to the Dewey School returned to their won communities to establish what were then called "progressive" schools that ultimately would give Dewey the title of Father of the Progressive Education movement.

In 1901, Dewey wrote: "Drawing, music, nature study with the field excursion and the school garden, manual training, the continuation of the constructive exercises of the kindergarten, the story and the tale, the biography, the dramatic episode and anniversary of heroic history found their way into the schoolrooms" (Boydston, 1976).

Dewey's Influence on the Kindergarten and Primary Grades. Dewey influenced the thinking of the influential kindergarten leader, Patty Smith Hill. In 1904, she delivered an address at the NEA in which she suggested the following requirements of an occupation in

the kindergarten and primary grades:

" a) it should be of worth from the child's point of view as well as from that of the kindergartner. In other words, it should be of value to the child in his own life; for example, as a toy; or b) it should be of value socially; that is, of use or service to the group to which the child himself belongs, or as a gift to another, who whom it will be of value; c) The product must be felt as aesthetically or industrially good; that is, it must be beautiful or useful to the child himself; or, if made for others, it seems fair to help the child to consider what would be useful or beautiful to the recipient" (p. 388-389).

As a leader of the "radical" or "liberal" kindergartners, Patty Smith Hill adopted the new psychology and championed the transformation of the kindergarten and primary grades. In speaking of the new occupations, she stated that they "have been called constructive because they were planned to meet the constructive instinct of childhood. As representations they are more real, and being constructed in three dimensions they offer quite a contrast to the flat picture occupations of the orthodox type. For example, a real kite is constructed instead of a geometric form, vaguely and often poorly representing a kite; a doll hat or doll rug is woven instead of a series of paper mats to be pasted in a book, or hung upon a wall" (Hill, 1907, p. 77).

#### The Laboratory Schools Movement and the New Schools

Educators became more aware of the new psychology and pedagogy of James, Dewey, and Parker. The gospel of childhood had been preached to teachers and teachers

of teachers across the nation by G. Stanley Hall giving impetus and scientific status to child growth and development. The heightened interest in children's behavior and natural development revealed itself in the various plans for "new schools" - "schools of tomorrow". Many experimental schools were founded across the nation and the results of their experiments and observations were published regularly (Rugg & Shumaker, 1928; Winsor, 1973).

The Dewey School. In 1896 John Dewey took a position at the University of Chicago to chair the department in Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy. From 1896 to 1903 he was the director of the laboratory school which was soon regarded as the Dewey School. The school, then housed in a private dwelling, opened its doors with sixteen children and two adults.

By 1897, the staff of teachers had grown to sixteen and there were sixty children enrolled. The children were organized into groups according to the three stages of growth. The first stage of growth included children aged four to seven; they spent their school day doing and telling, listening to music and stories, and playing. The second stage of growth included children aged 8-10; the curriculum emphasized the integration of reading, writing, and numbers to the social study. The third stage of growth included children aged 13-14 and the curricular emphasis was on applying literacy and computation skills to real problems.

The purposeful activities of the Dewey School were often initiated by the children themselves. The teachers and children together selected materials and books to solve problems and investigate ideas as they emerged. The children used the basic skills of

reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling to get information as well as a means of communication.

The Meriam Laboratory School in the University of Missouri. In 1904 Professor Meriam began work on a new curriculum that would be in accordance with the new psychology which viewed education's aim as development through natural child activity. He opened an eight-grade elementary school (Rugg, 1926). The school day was organized into four ninety minute time periods. The result of which created a more leisurely and thoughtful atmosphere in the classroom. The curriculum content was divided into four types of activities: observation, play, stories, and handwork (Meriam, 1920). The general outline of the curriculum for the primary grades was as follows:

Observation: Grades 1,2 plant life, animal life, people, earth, and sky

Grades 3,4 local industries and activities

Play: Grades 1,2,3 a great variety of games

Stories: Reading, telling, dramatizing, singing songs, studying pictures and drawings, assembly exercises, foreign language

Handwork: A great variety of useful and ornamental articles are made. Only a very few projects are suggested in these outlines. Materials included: paper, cord, yard, textiles, reed, raffia, wood, metal.

Francis Parker School. In an address to the National Society for the Study of Education, Flora Cooke, Principal of the Francis Parker School remarked:

"We must break down the idea that it is sufficient to keep children busy and happy in an isolated and protected area, detached from the

larger area of the world about them, with its pressing problems to be solved" (Cooke, 1926, p. 305).

She further elaborates the philosophy of the school:

"We believe that self-actuated work results in the greatest gain to the pupil, and therefore we seek to encourage self-initiated, individual, and small group projects, to foster special interests and to allow time for such activity on the regular school program" (Cooke, 1926, p. 306).

"We propose to fill every day with opportunities involving choice, both in academic work and in conduct, just as we plan to fill it with work involving interest, effort, initiative, and social responsibility" (Cooke, 1926, p. 307). Mrs. Cooke did not advocate a chaotic curriculum without limits. She described the curriculum making at the Francis Parker School as being derived from teacher selected large units of study. "However, the projects in each field of learning vary greatly from year to year, according to the interests, maturity, and ability of the grade groups" (Cooke, 1926, p. 308).

"The development of large group projects, which is characteristic of our school practice, has had a vital influence upon the curriculum and has developed an extremely valuable type of correlation, in which the entire work of the grade centers. This may include the work of the special teachers in art, handwork, literature, etc., over a long period of time" (Cooke, 1926, p. 311).

An example of a group project at the Francis Parker School is found in the third grade:

"For example, the work of the third grade child for a considerable portion of the year is focused upon the development of Chicago. The problems studied are the social, industrial, and economic problems which the city has had to meet in its rapid development from a trading post to a great metropolis. The science work of the grade contributes to this central theme through studies of fur-bearing animals and fur-trading, through study of problems of water supply and purification, of simple pumps, and the elementary physics and chemistry necessary to the understanding of such problems. In their handwork the pupils make models of block houses and forts, of prairie schooners and freight cars. In their art they draw and model scenes typical of the stages of the development of the city. The stories of early explorers, of pioneers of the West, and of Chicago's leading citizens, are a large part of the literature studied by the grades during this time. They write their own stories, and illustrate them with original drawings, so building up and writing their own history of the city. The needed drill in spelling and penmanship is motivated by their desire to write and make their histories neat and legible" (Cooke, 1926, p. 311-312).

The Play School or City and County Day School. In 1914, Caroline Pratt founded the Play School in New York City. She was eager to put into practice her theory of education which emphasized learning through play activities. She wanted "to offer an opportunity to the child to pick up the thread of life in his own community, and to express

what he gets in an individual way" (Pratt quoted in Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

"The experiment concerns itself with getting subject matter first hand, and it is assumed that the child has much information to begin with, that he is adding to it day by day, that it is possible to direct his attention so that he may get his information in a more related way; and with applying such information to individual schemes of play with related toys and blocks as well as expressing himself through such general means as drawing, dramatization, and spoken language" (Pratt quoted in Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

"Pratt thought that the Play School differed from the usual experimental classrooms in which teachers were the experimenters, children the material. In the Play School, children worked in an open, free environment, and were themselves the experimenters (Antler, 1987).

In 1926, Caroline Pratt described the process of curriculum making at the Play School which by then had been renamed the City and Country Day School. She described a group project of the "eights" which centered on the school store. The teachers at the school believed that the "eights" needed a "stabilizing job which would be likely to appeal to the whole group" (Pratt, 1926, p. 328). Miss Moore suggested that the "eights" take over the buying and selling of the school supplies. Miss Moore formulated connections to the subjects of geography, arithmetic, history, and science in the running of the school store. In speaking of the plans that the teacher had written, Miss Pratt said: "In making these paper formulations one always runs the risk of falling in love with them. When this

happens, the whole school is more or less victimized, and I might say that nothing causes greater consternation when it is discovered" (Pratt, 1926, p. 329).

Pratt describes the process of the school store project:

"In starting a new store the first thing that confronted the children was how to get the supplies. The actual cash had to be secured from the office in the form of a loan. They played with the situation more or less because they knew their parents had paid the office for school supplies. They took it seriously as well, for they did not suggest using their profits until the loan was paid back. In fact, their chief interest in their bookkeeping was to find out how soon they could make a payment on the loan. Having secured the money, the children investigated wholesale and retail houses at first hand. In some cases they interested dealers to the extent that they sent representatives to the class to give them exact information about the supplies they dealt in. These found inquiring minds to deal with. The children raised such questions as: how quantities are taken care of and were introduced to storerooms; where they got the materials and were told about manufacturing; how the materials go to New York and were told about water and land routes. They went back of these questioning, consulted maps, made maps, and took more trips. They build up a larger and different field of information than they had been familiar with before.

"Within this "store" formulation, the children individually and collectively planned and abandoned plans. They made their own forms, abandoned them, and tried over again. Their individual planning sometimes eventuated in something that was carried out by a group, sometimes in individual forms such as come out of pottery or shop materials or the use of drawing and painting materials" (Pratt, 1926, p. 329-330).

Caroline Pratt thought that she and her colleagues at the City and Country School seemed to be working out a project method, although she distinguished an essential difference: "The essential difference between our method and any project method with which I am familiar lies in the fact that ours is not merely a school method. It is a method which can be applied to adult social undertakings and is often applied to informal undertakings. It is a method of learning to live and work together" (Pratt, 1926, p. 332).

The School of Organic Education at Fairhope, Alabama. In 1907, Marietta Johnson opened the school at Fairhope, Alabama. The school is based upon the needs of the growing child and school was viewed as life itself rather than preparation for life. The youngest children at the school had daily opportunities for singing and dancing. Dramatics and creative handwork such as making things of clay, sand, and blocks; the handwork and dramatics either grew out of, or were related to, the study in literature and history. Stories and free outside play were an integral part of the daily life at Fairhope (Johnson, 1926).

The Lincoln School. In 1917, an experimental school affiliated with Teacher College at Columbia University, was founded for the purpose of studying "new and better materials

of instruction and improved methods of organization and teaching" (Rugg, 1926, p. 106). Some of the teachers that worked at the school "lived" with the children, some "investigated" them, and some "drilled them when they could" (Rugg, 1926). Of those teachers that "lived" with the children, there were those that implemented the project approach:

"There may be observed at the Lincoln School teachers who initiate curriculum study by starting children on fascinating, richly promising activities - for example, the making of play villages out of packing boxes, the construction of boats and bridges, the building and equipping of a Chinese house, the making and use of hand loom, the modelling of medieval castles, the assembling of block floor maps of Manhattan Island, the care and raising of white rats, canaries and baby alligators, the managing of school banks, the productions of newspapers, magazines and plays, the making of drums, marimbas, reed flutes, tubaphones, and primitive looking fiddles; and the composing of music to go with them; the creating of verse, study and essay for personal expression, the pleasure of classmates and for publication in the pupils' magazines" (Rugg, 1926, p. 107).

The Project Method. In 1918 William Heard Kilpatrick published an article in the Teachers College Record that received immediate attention. The article, titled "The Project Method" was the beginning of a new wave of excitement in the field of education. Although the term "projects" originated from the home projects then used in the agricultural schools, Kilpatrick modified the approach to be used in elementary schools across America.

The project method would enable children to initiate purposeful activity and deepen their understanding of the world around them.

Kilpatrick (1934) distinguished four types of projects. The producer's project was one in which something is created; it could be a prayer, a sand castle, a map, etc. The purpose of a consumer's project was to enjoy or appreciate something as in seeing and enjoying fireworks, a play, literature, or music. A third type of project was the purposeful problem project which could be an outgrowth of a producer's project to clear up an intellectual question or difficulty. The fourth type of project Kilpatrick called the specific learning project, the purpose of which was to practice specific academic skills. Kilpatrick is credited with the development of the project method in theory but it was Ellsworth Collings that expanded Kilpatrick's method and implemented it in practice (Thayer, 1928).

In 1919 Ellsworth Collings was supervisor of the three rural schools in Goodman, Missouri. He conducted a four year experiment with a project curriculum (Collings, 1923). He used two control schools with a total of sixty children and one experimental school with forty children. The control schools followed the state course of study and operated on a rigid schedule. The experimental school used a project curriculum organized around large blocks of time.

The children at the experimental school worked on four types of projects each day: 1) play projects, 2) excursion projects, 3) story projects, and 4) hand projects. Play projects included group games, folk dancing, drama, or social parties. Excursion projects included the purposeful study of problems connected with the environment and activities of the local people. Story projects could include oral storytelling, singing, picture books and story

recordings on phonograph records. Examples of hand projects would be making a rabbit trap, growing cantaloupes, or making hot cocoa for a luncheon.

The atmosphere at the experimental school was pleasant, homey and natural. The school building consisted of two large connecting rooms; one was the noisy workshop and one was the quiet reading room. Children were allowed to move from one room to the next.

During the course of the experiment three groupings of children emerged: 1) 6-8 years olds, 2) 9-11 years olds, and 3) 12-14 year olds. The children naturally formed these groupings and were free to mingle socially as they chose.

The results of the experiment revealed that the project curriculum was successful. The children's achievements far surpassed those of the control schools (Collings, 1926). The children's positive attitudes towards school increased as well.

In 1921, the National Society for the Study of Education published a report on new materials of instruction. The kindergarten and primary grade materials all related to projects. The relation of interest to effort and experience and construction to learning were emphasized:

"The kindergartner sees that children's interests and activities must serve as the starting point in their education and that these interests must be so guided as to create problems for them to solve. The approach to subject matter is made by the meeting of play situations and the solving of play problems. It cannot, therefore, be stereotyped, but must be brought afresh to each individual or group. When the approach is thus

psychologically made, the working out of the problem naturally takes the project form. The project is not, therefore, new to the kindergartner of insight, since she has worked in the spirit of that method for years. The curriculum of the kindergartner is in fact embodied in a series of projects by the working out of which children gain an insight into the world of man and nature and their own relation to both. At the beginning of the year, for example, they carry out in play the activities of the home; they build the store from which the home secures its supply of food and dramatize the process of buying and selling; and they make in the sand table the garden or miniature farm which supplies the store. They arrange a harvest festival in preparation for the Thanksgiving party in which the products that characterize the season are grouped together. Other projects worked out in other seasons or in preparation for other festivals interpret for the children other significant aspects of life. In these several ways human life and activity come to have meaning for children, and they see themselves as parts and partners in the great drama that is being played on the stage of nature" (NSSE, 1921, p. 1).

Speaking in 1925, Patty Smith Hill said: "The so-called project method with its emphasis upon the child's ability and right to plan as well as execute the plans of the teacher, the ability and the right of children to learn from and help each other, has give us the socialized kindergarten of today (Hill, 1925, p. 488).

### The Effect of the New Education

The new schools that grew and spread during the period between 1890 and 1930 were numerous. These experiments and innovations are revealed in the literature of the history of education. What effect did these "new schools" have on American education? How widespread were the new methods of teaching which included the project approach? In 1928, Rugg and Shumaker stated that 95% of American schools were made up of formally organized subjects of study, systematized lessons, rigorous examinations, set practice exercises and recitations.

Larry Cuban, the author of How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms asserts that little has changed since 1890 and that the New Education Movement had little if any effect on the rank and file of American classrooms (Cuban, 1984).

### The Transformation of the Idea of Self-Activity

The idea of self-activity which had been transplanted in the United States by the disciples and follower of Friedrich Froebel in the 1850s was transformed and creatively interpreted by kindergartners and educationists alike. The importance of action and experience in the learning process and the aim of education to promote growth and development were products of the child study movement and the new psychology; these ideas were accepted by the "new schools" as broad principles for practice.

Curriculum making emphasized activity on the part of the child, however, the degree to which these activities were educational and child-initiated remained the subject of discussion. As the project method became popularized in the 1920s, criticism was voiced

and teachers were cautioned to use handwork and projects not as ends in themselves but as means to an educative end (Parker, 1919; Pratt, 1926; Rugg & Shumaker, 1928). Some schools thought they were implementing the project approach when they planned history, shop, or arithmetic projects. Caroline Pratt distinguished between subject matter "projects" when describing the work at her school:

"We do not have history, geography, nor yet shop projects. We do not even think in these obvious school terms. The shop, the laboratory, the library, are places to go to work on something which applies to the general program of the particular group or possibly to something which is going on outside the school" (Pratt, 1926, p. 332).

By 1930, the "activity curriculum" as it was to be called then, signaled a new era in the history of the project approach in which educationists would attempt to clarify educational child-initiated activity (Bain, 1929; California State Department of Education, 1930; Holdford, 1929; Srygley, 1929).

Describing schooling for young children in 1928, Rugg & Shumaker state:

"In the formal school of today the teacher still does the thinking, planning and initiating. Pupils are passive, quiescent, generally uninterested if not actively antagonistic. Learning is at a low ebb, if not at a standstill. In the child-centered school, however, pupils are alive, active, working hard, inventing, organizing, contributing original ideas, assembling materials, carrying out enterprises"

(Rugg & Shumaker, 1928, p. 57).

This then is the great promise of the project approach.

- Antler, J. (1987). Lucy Sprague Mitchell. New Haven, CONN: Yale University Press.
- Archambault, R.D. (Ed.). (1964). John Dewey on education: Selected writings. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bain, W.E. et.al. (1929). Classroom procedures which promote desirable physical development, knowledge, habits, attitudes, and skills. In Proceedings of the sixty-seventh annual meeting of the NEA. Washington, DC: The National Education Association.
- Bowen, H. C. (1897). Froebel and education through self-activity. New York: Charles Scribners Sons.
- Boydston, J.A. (1976). John Dewey: The Middle Works. Carbondale, ILL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bryan, A.E. (1890). The letter killeth. Proceedings of the NEA. Topeka: Kansas Publishing House.
- California State Department of Education. (1930). The teacher's guide to child development: Manual for kindergarten and primary grades. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Collings, E. (1923). An experiment with a project curriculum. New York: Macmillan.
- Committee of Nineteen. (1924). Pioneers of the kindergarten in America. New York: The Century Co.
- Cooke, F.J. (1926). Fundamental considerations underlying the curriculum of the Francis W. Parker School. In G.M. Whipple (Ed.) The twenty-sixth yearbook of the NSSE: Part I, pp. 305-313). Bloomington, ILL: Public School Publishing.
- Cropsey, N. (1891). The organic connection between the kindergarten and the primary

- school. Journal of proceedings and addresses. New York: National Educational Association.
- Cuban, L. (1984). How teachers taught: Constancy and change in American classrooms 1890-1980. New York: Longman.
- Curti, M. (1963). The social ideas of American educators. Patterson, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co.
- Davis, E.C. (1894). The ideal primary school curriculum. Journal of the proceedings of the NEA. National Educational Association.
- Dewey, J. (1900). The school and society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. & Dewey, E. (1915). Schools of tomorrow. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co.
- Dunkel, H.B. (1970). Herbart and Hebartianism: An educational ghost story. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (1993). The hundred languages of children. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Frederickson, A.E. (1891). Theory tested by experience. Journal of proceedings and addresses. New York: National Educational Association.
- Hill, P.S. (1904). The kindergarten and the elementary school as illustrated in their exhibits. Journal of proceedings and addresses of the forty-third annual meeting. Winona, Minnesota: National Educational Association.
- Hill, P.S. (1907). Some conservative and progressive phases of kindergarten education. In M.J. Holmes (Ed.), The sixth yearbook of the NSSE; Part II. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Hill, P.S. (1925). Changes in curriculum and method during the past twenty-five years in kindergarten education. Journal of proceedings of the NEA. National Education Association.
- Hill, P.S. (Reprinted in 1942). Kindergarten. Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International.
- Hinckley, F.A. (1894). Proceedings of the NEA.
- James, W. (1901). Talks to teachers. New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Johnson, M. (1926). The educational principles of the School of Organic Education, Fairhope, Alabama. In G.M. Whipple (Ed.) Twenty-sixth yearbook of the NSSE: Part I, pp. 349-351. Bloomington, ILL: Public School Publishing.
- Katz, L. (1990). Impressions of Reggio Emilia preschools. Young children, 45:11-12.
- Katz, L. & Chard, S. (1989). Engaging children's minds: The project approach. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Kilpatrick, W.H. (1918). The project method. Teachers college record, 19:319-335.
- Kilpatrick, W.H. (1934). Foundations of method: Informal talks on teaching. New York: Macmillan.
- LeeKeenan, D. & Edwards, C. (1992). Using the project approach with toddlers. Young children, 47:31-35.
- Lilley, I.M. (1967). Friedrich Froebel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mayhew, K.C. & Edwards, A.C. (1936). The Dewey school. New York: D. Appleton.
- McKee, J. (1923). Purposeful handwork. New York: Macmillan.
- Meriam, J.L. (1920). Child life and the curriculum. New York: World Book.

- Mills, H.M. (1907). The evolution of the kindergarten program. In M.J. Holmes (Ed.), The sixth yearbook of the NSSE: Part II (pp. 86-114). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- New, R. (1990). Excellent early education: A city in Italy has it. Young children, 45: 4-10.
- Newcombe, L.T. (1891). Kindergarten exhibits. Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the NEA. New York: National Educational Association.
- Parker, S.C. (1919). General methods of teaching in elementary schools. Boston: Ginn & Co.
- Pratt, C. (1926). Curriculum-making in the City and Country School. In G.M. Whipple (Ed.), Twenty-sixth yearbook of the NSSE: Part I, pp. 327-332. Bloomington, ILL: Public School Publishing.
- Pratt, C. (1990). I learn from children. New York: Harper & Row. (Originally published in 1948).
- Ross, E.D. (1976). The kindergarten crusade: The establishment of preschool education in the U.S. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- Rugg, H. (1926). Curriculum making in laboratory schools. In G.M. Whipple (Ed.), The twenty-sixth yearbook of the NSSE: Part I, pp. 83-115). Bloomington, ILL: Public School Publishing Co.
- Rugg, H. (1936). American life and the school curriculum. Boston: Ginn & Co.
- Rugg, H. (1947). Foundations for American education. Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book.
- Rugg, H. & Shumaker, A. (1928). The child-centered school. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New

York: World Book Co.

Shapiro, M.S. (1983). Child's garden: The kindergarten movement from Froebel to Dewey.

University Park & London: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Smith, N.A. (1888). Report on kindergarten exhibits. Proceedings of the NEA. Topeka:

Kansas Publishing House.

Srygley, H.F., et.al. (1929). An activity curriculum at work. In Proceedings of the sixty-

seventh annual meeting of the NEA. Washington, DC: The National Education

Association.

Tanner, D. & Tanner, L. (1980). Curriculum development. New York: Macmillan.

Thayer, V.T. (1928). The passing of the recitation. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co.

Trepanier-Street, M. (1993). What's so new about the project approach? Childhood

Education, 70:25-28.

Vandewalker, N. (1908). The kindergarten in American education. New York: Macmillan.

Whipple, G.M. (Ed.). (1921). The twenty-sixth yearbook of the NSSE; Part I. Bloomington,

ILL: Public School Publishing.

Wiebe, E. (1907). Paradise of childhood Springfield, MASS: Milton Bradley Co.

Winsor, C.B. (Ed.). (1973). Experimental schools revisited; Bulletins of the Bureau of

Educational Experiments. New York: Agathon Press.

Wirth, A.G. (1966). John Dewey as educator: His designs for work in education (1894-1904).

New York: John Wiley and Sons.