

Education is ever changing. From the times of Aristotle where only males were being taught by the philosopher to the differences in what were taught in previous years compared to now, it has changed significantly. Aristotle, a pupil of arguably the most well-known philosopher Plato, believed that “All men by nature desire knowledge” (350 B.C). A quote that can be viewed in multiple ways, such as him being only focussed on educating men, but only few were worthy in his times. There are many philosophers that studied and based their work on philosophies and theories of education such as John Locke, Jean Piaget and Paulo Freire. Piaget looked at the way education was delivered and wrote that “play is the answer to how anything new comes about”. A huge difference from how traditional schooling was taught during his time. Play in today’s education system is at the core of learning and Piaget highlighted this through his work which has influenced our schooling techniques to this day. However, some of the work completed by philosophers could now be considered outdated, such as the work by John Locke being written and studied within the 16th century. He was widely known for his interest and work on Enlightenment and is often named “The Father of Liberalism”. A proper noun that is being used less in current society.

John Dewey was a well-known American psychologist, philosophy and education reformer throughout the 1800’s to 1900’s. With his 65-year writing career as a teacher also, Dewey’s studies and work made him one of the greatest thinkers throughout the 20th century. Dewey put emphasis on progressive education which has now been recognised as a huge contribution towards experimentation in reference to knowledge rather than the authoritarian approach. Dewey gave help in the founding of pragmatism although he referred to his work as instrumentalism and was a philosopher that believed and showed interest in education and learning being done to its best ability through doing. In chapter twelve of his book *Democracy and Education* Dewey wrote “Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn”. Demonstrating his view of hands on learning, similar to the learning that takes part in schools today. An example being using materials in chemistry lessons to learn rather than simply learning from texts.

John Dewey made substantial changes and influences on the practice of education and how it is taught today as well as the education system in place during the time of his work during the first half of the twentieth century. John Dewey had a dual perspective and strongly disagreed with conventional schooling during his time. The philosopher believed through traditional education the pupils experience was worthless compared to others in society and knowledge is classified into disciplines. Dewey stated that human knowledge was divided according to the schools, not according to the pupil’s experience which didn’t have a positive impact. It is evident in Dewey’s work and theory on social learning that his influence on education is still huge. Dewey believed that schooling should always be representative of a social environment and due to this belief “all pupils learn best when in settings that are natural and social” (Flinders & Thornton, 2013).

Dewey suggested that schooling methods and the education system was too political, and this needed to change. Dewey stated that “Education is a social process; education is

growth" (1939). and thus, should steer away from the political ideology. Education today is focussed on social aspects such as group work, communicating and playing with peers in comparison to grammar schools in the 1940's as an example. It was argued by Dewey that children didn't need the political influence within education and school is primarily a social institution. The education system during Dewey's time of study was formal and preparation for children to become adults, and as Hegel argued, 'a transition between family and civic society' which Dewey himself did not agree with. Dewey wrote in his book *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897) that "education is a process of living and not preparation for future living". From this we can see how Dewey was viewed as a progressive of his time. Dewey showed through his work that change was a key part to his ideas being successful. A prominent feature of John Dewey's work was his 'laboratory schools'. A creation Dewey put forward during his time at The University of Chicago in 1894. It is important to note that Dewey was a failed teacher, so when this educational institute was made it was made by someone who was considered incapable to educate after he failed to teach adolescent pupils.

Laboratory schools were what Dewey wanted to be the foundations of an education reform. In his school in Chicago, the first made, he wanted learners to create their own experiences and allow them to enquire, to experiment and discover independently. This now reflects some education techniques we use today, such as allowing children to discover new things through sensory play. He gave his staff minimal instructions to teach as he wanted the student to be in control. This clearly differs from the routines followed by educators today but played a key part in his research by using these schools. Dewey wrote that schooling should be "A society of free individuals". Dewey wanted to free pupils of the old school system that he argued was designed to motivate pupils to learn established subjects in one form, such as learning maths and geography in the classroom through teaching with books and using tests. John Dewey believed this gave a negative outlook on education for pupils and didn't allow them to enjoy learning. Hence why he suggested that pupils should feel 'free' whilst in school within their own learning. This approach to learning is currently used in The Foundation Phase where it is stated that "A well-planned curriculum gives children opportunities to be creatively involved in their own learning". Much like Dewey suggested, it is vital for a child to be creative and have a certain amount of control over their learning. He also believed that a child's attitude should reflect in the curriculum, which has proven possible today.

As mentioned before, Dewey also believed that education is ever changing, and laboratory schools were to promote a child's independent tendencies and the business of the school is to train children to show children how to be cooperative and mutually helpful in life, which differed from what education was offering during his time in America- such as having one-room schoolhouses and children having to wear a 'dunce hat' as punishment. The word dunce standing for the concrete noun idiot. John Dewey suggested that "philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education" (1916). He believed the ideas he had developed were to change education permanently, however some argue to although his views on education were effective for schooling, he did make mistakes. It was suggested by W. F. Warde that he didn't understand "the forces at work in American society and of the real relations between the educational and the economic systems, under capitalist rule."

Warde's argument is a vital recognition of Dewey's work as education leads children into society and if mistakes were made, it can be argued that children may have not been educated appropriately. Dewey saw teachers themselves as positive and negative components of education. He believed that teachers are members of society, and that with laboratory schools it would have shown them new ways of teaching and help to break down the barriers between schools and communities. As mentioned before, within his laboratory school he gave little guidance to teachers so a wider and more free method of teaching could be used. This reflects current education where children are given free time to play independently with little influence from the teacher. Messy play that is often used inside and outside of school is a concept that many believe helps children develop, and a similar take was used by Dewey whereby he used sand to teach Geography. Nicki Smith- a founder of a creative play programme believes messy play gives children "the ability to challenge, question and explore", a concept Dewey wanted to input into his work. A clear approach from Dewey's theories are being used in education today.

Dewey was known to have a negative outlook on current schooling in his times. As a teacher and philosopher, Dewey felt that schools and education systems were cutting pupils off from their own psychological ties such as family and society and this would make their work less meaningful and then harder to develop personal morals and values, and only follow those produced by schools. John Dewey suggested that school was an industry that created a world which separated pupils from their personal lives. He argued that by socialising pupils it would benefit them and prepare them better for the outside world, but education was more than what happened in school. Dewey the acclaimed American philosopher said himself in his book *Democracy and Education*, "The goal of education is to enable individuals to continue their education". This differed from the view during the 1900's that once a child's school education had finished, they were simply a working member of society. Mark K. Smith highlighted how Dewey's work also influenced informal education and wrote "his concern with interaction and environments for learning provide a continuing framework for practice".

Although Dewey himself wanted education to be less political, the advancements and changes he was making to the education system often came under attack by political parties due to the impact it would have had on the then current social structure. This mirrors current political views on schooling, adding the progressive forms of education such as sensory play, outdoor learning and one to one support affects social order due to funding. State schools are under far much more pressure than private schools, a view which the Labour party in current times is trying to spread. Dewey's theories on schooling such as children receiving the same level of education was criticised by George Novack, a Marxist. He argued that "If children are treated as equals at school, they encounter many gradations of poverty and wealth outside". Dewey himself realised that there were problems with his theory of education and how it would be affected by politics. He believed solely in socialism even within the Great Depression and as politicians believe today, understood that the working class was not receiving the same benefits. He asked teachers to "ally themselves with their friends against their common foe, the privileged class, and in the alliance

develop the character, skill and intelligence that are necessary to make a democratic social order a fact". This is still affecting our education system today, and movements by the Conservatives and Labour Party are using this to shape the education system. Dewey's work mirrors many aspects of current educational problems and shows how his work has contributed to today's society.

Dewey's views were also developed and agreed with by the first female medical doctor in Italy, Maria Montessori. This was a history changing achievement during the times of a male-dominated society. Montessori cared for children with disabilities but focussed on education whilst doing this (Shute 2002). Like Dewey, she lectured and studied pedagogy and created a new educational philosophy in the early 1900's named The Montessori Method. Kocher (1973) stated how "Over 60 years after her death on May 6th, 1952, her theories and approach continue to influence educational philosophy". To show the impact Montessori's work still has on society, it is known that over 5,000 Montessori schools still exist in the United States (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). Both philosophers were against traditional education and the concept that it was only the teacher that was the centre of educating a child. Dewey and Montessori both believed that children learn through experience and knowledge is derived from experience. The two philosophers showed extremely similar outlooks, such that a child should use their senses such as hands, eyes and ears to learn.

Since Montessori challenging the teacher-student dynamic in the early 20th Century, it has made a substantial influence on schools today. For example, schools in Wales have a child-centred approach and learning through experience under The Foundation Phase which reflects Montessori's work. A child centred approach being the allowance of children to make their own choices in actions and activities based on learning. It allows freedom and multiple choice. Montessori used this method throughout her career and stated, "Young people must have enough freedom to allow them to act on individual initiative...". Her work is clearly still influencing education today as this style of teaching will also be part of the Curriculum for Wales 2022 where they emphasize independence and child- leadership under the changes to the Characteristics, Attributes and Values of Wider Skills overview. Current education has brought attention to sensory play, free learning and choice when in educational settings, such as being allowed to choose which toys to play with, who to interact with in comparison to traditional education whereby children sat at desks and followed basic instructions of what to learn and how to do so.

Maria Montessori's work allows a self-lead approach to education and is a multi-age environment, allowing children to learn at their own pace. The AMS director of School Quality and Accreditation- Melanie Thiesse, supported Montessori's work. She spoke, "Rather than simply filling children with facts, Montessori education strives to nurture each child's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect.". This philosophy methods are still being used over a century later, but some argue that children often need guidance, rules and less creativity to learn which isn't strongly inputted in The Montessori Method as mainstream schools. It has been argued by a pupil of a Montessori School that the methods

are not always positive and work well. Lexi Montgomery argued that although she enjoyed the “sense of confidence and creative freedom” she gained, the curriculum is too loose and not guided enough. Montgomery stated that she was under-prepared for subjects such as mathematics and science in comparison to language and art which she believed she was ‘over-prepared’.

Philosophy on education that was written thousands of years ago by men such as Plato and Aristotle are still influencing and shaping our approaches to education as well as our understanding, so it is no surprise that Montessori’s work is contributing to our current education systems and knowledge. The Montessori Method involves hand-on learning and self-directed activity. The work of Montessori impacted and helped design The Art of Learning Programme which runs in over 500 schools in Wales and is in partnership with the Welsh Government and the Arts Council Wales. The programme allows children to use art, music and imagination to improve their learning. The chairman of the Arts Council Wales, Phil George claimed from the programme, “We have already started to see that by nurturing and developing the creativity of pupils, they’re taking steps to achieve their academic potential and grow as well-rounded individuals...”. It is clear that the methods Montessori developed and inputted into her schools has proven effective to current education systems and has helped educators see the significance of individuality, independence and creativity on children’s education and learning.

It can also be argued that Montessori’s work was the first route to parental involvement in education. Malm (2007) argued that Montessori schools “attract parents who are interested in being active in a parents association and thereby become more involved in their children’s education...”. This idea has influenced education today as it is stated in the Institute of Education that parental involvement is key feature of current education. This was mentioned in the 1997 “Excellence in Schools” White Paper that pupils needed the support from their parents to reach their full potential. It was researched in 2002 by The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) that when parents were asked about their involvement in the education of their children, 58% of the parents “believed they had at least equal responsibility with the school for their child’s education”. Parental involvement is a huge part of education today, schools consistently have parents evening and communicating groups such as Class DoJo.

Montessori and her work promote the idea of children being active learners and the Birth to Three Matters Framework puts emphasis on this idea and has increased the detail put into the environments they learn in- much like the 600 Montessori schools in the UK. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) parallels The Montessori Method and some of her key themes and ideas. The EYFS created the theme of a 'Unique Child' and this is based on the principle put forward by Montessori, that the educator should "follow the child" because every child is different and an individual. It is also stated in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework that children "innately 'primed' to learn from the environments both physical and human around them. Much like Montessori believed, the environment around the child should be free and believed "There is a great sense of community within the Montessori classroom...". Educators today have followed more and more methods put forward by Montessori, such as allowing children to work with older children under 'buddy systems' much like the Montessori classroom of mixed age ranges. She has influenced numerous parts of the education system in the 21st century.

To conclude, it is not hard to see the phenomenal impact that the two philosophers mentioned have made to current education systems all over the world. Starting in America and Italy, both Dewey and Montessori have spread their knowledge and techniques to the UK, including The Children's Room Swansea, a Montessori based classroom. As Montessori mentioned in 1948, "Times have changed, and science has made great progress, and so has our work". This quote is still applicable today. As Dewey's work also influenced education, it is important to remember that history has changed and so has society. Although they have influenced us greatly, some teachings may be outdated and no longer effective- such as Montessori schools now being privately funded.

References

Creativity Culture Education (2018) *Lead Creative Schools*. Newcastle Upon-Tyne. CCE publications.

Accessed 28/11/2019 at:

https://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/case_studies/lead-creative-schools-programme-wales-2/

Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. Ch 12. New York. University of Columbia publications.

Elkind, D. (2008) *The Power of Play*. Illinois. The University of Illinois publication.

Accessed: 11/11/2019 at:

<https://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/1-1-article-elkind-the-power-of-play.pdf>

Gueterbock, R. (2016) *Montessori and the EYFS*. London. Montessori Society AMI publications.

Accessed at 29/11/2019 at:

<https://www.montessorisociety.org.uk/Articles/4441929>

Handy, K. (2016) *John Locke: Father of Liberalism*. Michigan. Action Institute publications.

Accessed: 11/11/2019 at:

<https://blog.acton.org/archives/88741-john-locke-father-of-liberalism.html>

Lehrer, S. (Ed.), *John Dewey: Master educator*. New York: Atherton Press.

Malm, Birgitte. (2007) *Constructing professional identities: Montessori teachers' voices and visions*. London. Taylor & Francis publications.

Accessed 28/11/2019 at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0031383042000245799>

Meinke, H. (2019) *Exploring the Pros and Cons of Montessori Education*. Kansas. Rasmussen College publications.

Accessed 15/11/2019 at:

https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/pros_cons_montessori_education/

Montessori, M. (1936). *The Secret of Childhood*. B. B. Carter (Ed.). Calcutta: Orient Longmans.

Montessori, M. (1948). *The Discovery of the Child*. P 37. New York. Ballantine Books.

Montessori, M. (1994). *From Childhood to Adolescence*. P 73. Oxford: Clio Press publications

McCall, R. L. (1966). *Dewey, Harper, and the University of Chicago*. Brickman, W. W publications.

Smith, N. (2015) *It's Not Just Messy Play*. Devon. England. The Creation Station publications.

Accessed 12/11/2019 at:

<https://www.thecreationstation.co.uk/inspiration/its-not-just-messy-play>

Williams, B. Williams, J. Ullman, A. (2002) *Parental Involvement in Education*. Norwich. Department of Education publications.

Accessed 29/11/2019 at:

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4669/1/RR332.pdf>

Welsh Assembly Government. (2015) *The Foundation Phase Framework*. Cardiff. Welsh Government publications.

Accessed 12/11/2019 at:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/foundation-phase-framework-revised-2015.pdf>

Welsh Government. (2019) *A Guide to Curriculum for Wales*. Cardiff. Welsh Government publications.

Accessed 15/11/2019 at:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/draft-curriculum-for-wales-2022/a-guide-to-curriculum-for-wales-2022/>

