Vygotsky, Montessori and Piaget, OH MY!

How what they DID, influences what you DO!

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Friedrich Froebel 1782-1852 (70)

- Lived in Germany
- His mother died when he was an infant
- Grew up playing in gardens, fell in love with nature and natural environs
- Became a teacher in Frankfurt
- Froebel is credited with inventing Kindergarten at some point between 1837 and 1840
- Americans Frank Lloyd Wright and Buckminster Fuller were influenced by Froebel’s school of thought, and you can see his influence in both of their architectural designs.
FROEBEL BELIEVED

- Hands-on learning was best
- Children need to be active
- Active and direct observation is the best way to plan education
- Children needed to be engaged in self-directed activities and the teacher was to serve as the guide
Froebel’s Goals For His Kinders:

- Physical activity (large motor)
- Physical dexterity (fine motor)
- Sensory awareness (observations)
- Creative expression (songs, art, drama, dance)
- Exploration of ideas and concepts (discussion)
- Singing
- Experience of being with others (social/emotional)
- Satisfaction of the soul

Nothing without joy

–Loris Malaguzzi
FROEBEL’S GIFTS

- Froebel established a series of playthings (gifts) which provided children with educational experiences
- Until this time toys were for amusement and education occurred via books and direct instruction
- Froebel flipped this by using PLAY as the engine and the gifts as the fuel
- Froebel codified up to gift 7, the rest were numbered by colleagues after his death
- The building block gifts (2-6) were initially crafted by the Milton Bradley Co.
- Examples of the gifts as well as a history of blocks are provided on your extra handout
- [http://www.froebelfoundation.org/philosophy.html](http://www.froebelfoundation.org/philosophy.html) to learn more about the philosophy and the gifts.
- [http://www.froebelusa.org](http://www.froebelusa.org) to learn more about their association & conferences
Maria Montessori 1870-1952 (82)

- Montessori began her career as a medical student with a specialty in pediatrics
- She was the first woman to graduate from an Italian medical school
- She worked with children in asylums and realized that the children did not have problems – their environments did!
- Came to be called “teacher” by her peers
- Opened Casa Di Bambini to keep the children off the streets in the slums of Rome (at the request of the government)
- No materials for children so she made them
- Within 6 years of opening Casa Di Bambini in Rome there were over 100 schools in the USA following a “Montessori” philosophy
- Maria left Italy for political reasons in the 1930s and she lived out her days in India, England and Holland
KEY MONTESSORI POINTS

- The notion of “child-sized” or “child-scaled” was nonexistent before Maria Montessori invented it
- Having the stuff does not make you “Montessori”
- Control and establish the environment
- The environment should be prepared, beautiful, orderly and shall have lots of opportunity to engage the senses
- Children need real tools and accessible equipment
- Children need free time to explore
- Teachers need to prepare the space and then step back and facilitate
- Don’t pull the children away when they are engaged
- OBSERVE OBSERVE OBSERVE
- The teacher should always be learning right with the children. Is the space working? Not working? What can I do about it?
“the children are now working as if I do not exist”  
-Maria Montessori

“don’t worry, I will not die, I have too much to do.”  
-Maria Montessori as a child to her mother

Read More:  
*The Absorbent Mind*  
*Dr. Montessori’s Own Handbook*  
*The Secret of Childhood*  
*The Essential Montessori*, Elizabeth Hainstock  
*Basic Montessori*, David Gettman
LEV VYGOTSKY 1896-1934 (38)

- Studied literature at University of Moscow
- Usually associated with cognitive and language development
- Through observations noticed that within a group of children at the same “level” there were some that learned with little help and some who needed more assistance

Vygotsky is often lost in the shadow of Jean Piaget. Vygotsky died after a long battle with TB. It is often thought that had he lived longer his contributions would have rivaled those of Piaget. However, because of impact of Tools of the Mind (Bedrova and Leong) we might see his influence had just been incubating!
TOOLS OF THE MIND (BEDROVA & LEONG)

- Mature play = increase in executive function (EF)

- Executive function:
  - Self regulation
  - Working memory
  - Cognitive functioning
**Seven Essential Life Skills:**

**Focus and Self Control:** Executive Function: paying attention, remembering rules, exercising self-control

**Perspective Taking:** More than empathy; figuring out what other people are thinking; understanding their intentions

**Communicating:** More than language, speaking & writing; understanding how our communications will be understood by others

**Making Connections:** Figuring out what is the same, what is different; sorting into categories

**Critical Thinking:** Search for valid & reliable knowledge

**Taking on Challenges:** Willing to take them on, instead of avoiding or coping with them

**Self-Directed, Engaged Learning:** Through learning we realize our potential, it lasts a lifetime.

**As identified by Ellen Galinsky in her book, Mind in the Making**
The interaction between children and teachers and its vital role in advancing knowledge

ZPD = the zone of proximal development. The difference between what a child can do on his/her own and what they can do with assistance (from either a peer or an adult)

When this “assistance” is offered it is referred to as “scaffolding”

Keen observation is at the core of effective and successful scaffolding. Scaffolding is NOT “pushing”

Suggested to use props, real materials and loose parts in the environment

Valued conversations and working together

Strong emphasis on observations

Believed learning takes place when children play
Z.P.D.
Vygotsky

Can do with assistance!

Do by myself

Pushing too far

Zone of proximal development = Z.P.D.
Rudolf Steiner (Waldorf) 1861-1925 (64)

- Steiner was an Austrian philosopher and spiritual scientist who believed that we must awaken to our own inner nature and the spiritual realities of outer nature and the cosmos. He believed that the awareness of this relationship brings greater reverence for life.

- Clarification: although this is the theoretical basis of his “method” it is not taught to the students.

- There is a lot of myth around Waldorf

- So if his name is Steiner, why is the theory, style and philosophy referred to as “Waldorf”? 
KEY COMPONENTS OF WALDORF

- Learning through doing
- De-emphasis on “academics” in the early grades
- Strong focus on social skills
- Children often learn to read from their own writing
- Ideally the same group stays together for the first 8 years. Strong emphasis on the relationships between students/teachers
- Traditional “frills” are central to a Waldorf style: music, art, gardening, crafts, etc.
- Children are traditionally taught to knit, play the recorder and a stringed instrument
Waldorf strongly discourages electronic media

Spiral curriculum: the same basic knowledge is introduced and experienced at varying levels of depth, each time becoming more complex and integrated.

A noticeable rhythm to the day filled with order, beauty and harmony.

An education of the HEART the HAND and the MIND

Often seen more outside of USA because there is not the pressure of (what Piaget called) the “American Question” = our fixation on accelerating early academics.
The theory often referred to simply as “Reggio” is not a person, but a place: a town called Reggio Emilia, located in Northern Italy.

Reggio emerged after WWII when, as the story goes, Loris Malaguzzi rode his bicycle to the war-torn village of Villa Cella (outside of Reggio Emilia) because he heard they were celebrating liberation from Mussolini’s fascist regime by building a school out of rubble, bricks & rocks, and raising money by selling horses, ammunition & tanks left behind by German soldiers.

Malaguzzi went to Rome, took some child psych classes, then returned to Reggio Emilia to assist in running the school. He eventually guided the creation of more. He is considered the “father” of the Reggio movement.

The educational philosophy which came out of this town (in the late 1940’s!) has been influencing the international early childhood scene since the late 1980’s.
**CAUTION NORTH AMERICANS!**

...we are often easily seduced by trappings that appear to be essential cornerstones of a “philosophy.” We must take care. You don’t become Reggio by taking your clocks down, having an art room/workshop (atelier), buying a light table, using a photo documentation board or by draping crepe-like fabric from the ceiling. It really is a way of thinking. It is a WAY OF LIFE. It is truly an inspiration for all educators. Yet in its purest form it couldn’t work here. Why not? It is culturally, socially and community based. And simply stated, it’s not our culture.

**YET the basic underpinnings originated in the USA.**

*Overheard at a conference: “We can’t be Reggio anymore because it violated a fire code...”*
KEY REGGIO POINTS:

- Make the learning visible
- Small group work
- Continuity – staying together for 3 years
- Partnership (the community based management of schools)
- Relationship driven (parents, teachers, children & community)
- Documentation
- Well-being and being “at ease” in the setting
- Good taste, aesthetics
- Culture (conscious of the cultural nature of ideas and practices)
Key influencers:
- Dewey
- Bruner
- Vygotsky
- Froebel
- Piaget

Thoughts from Lella Gandini’s interview with *The American Journal of Play*

You have to notice that she noticed.
Jean Piaget 1869-1980 (84)

- Piaget had a PhD in biology & psychology.
- After graduation he taught at a school for boys in Paris that was run by Alfred Binet, the developer of the Binet intelligence test.
- While scoring tests, Piaget noticed consistent similarities in the wrong answers children were giving at certain ages. This was his EUREKA! He wondered, “What thought process are they using???”
- Conservation Tests: the ability to keep in mind what stays the same and what changes in an object after it has changed aesthetically. One who can conserve is able to reverse the transformation mentally.
  SIDEBAR: You can watch conservation task videos on YouTube
- Piaget is the USA’s primary preschool influence
**Piaget’s Key Points**

- Free Play
- Real experiences
- Children allowed to do things for themselves
- Children learn when curiosity is satisfied
- The teacher’s job is to nurture inquiry
- Play is important for learning
- Teachers need to provide problem solving challenges, not just give out information
PIAGET (CONTINUED)

- Curiosity and wonder are key ingredients to learning – cannot “make” them learn
- Children build knowledge through what they do and experience
- Stages of Cog Dev that impact our age group:
  - **Sensorimotor** 0-18 months
    - Object permanence
    - Separation anxiety
  - **Preoperational thought** 18 mos – 6 years
    - Literal – ness
    - Over generalizations
- Current questioning of the scientific validity of his work
JOHN DEWEY 1859-1952 (93)

- Started as a philosopher (Chicago based for the major part of his work)
- He is the American educator who influenced our field the most
- Became friends with student Alice Chipman, who was conducting her own research on how social problems influenced education
- Dewey was interested in her research, they eventually married
- Dewey was leading the “Progressive” educational movement while Piaget was in Switzerland and Montessori in Italy. They were all influencing the same time frame
Dewey’s Key Points:

- Children learn by doing. This was a RADICAL idea when he proposed it.
- Children need real experiences.
- Experiences should encourage both experimentation and independent thinking.
- Education and life are interrelated – they cannot be separated!
- Child centered does not = CHAOS!
Dewey (continued)

- Education must be interactive
- School MUST involve the child’s social world in order to be relevant
- Curriculum must be based on interests and observations
- To be meaningful it must be more than just “fun”
- Teachers MUST be able to articulate their intention and purpose
Who Else?

- **Magda Gerber**: http://www.rie.org/
  - RIE: resources for infant educators
- **Emmi Pikler**: Respect!
  http://pikler.org/PiklerPractices.html
- **Sara Smilansky**: Kinds of Play: functional, constructive, dramatic/pretend, & games with rules.
- **Abraham Maslow**: Hierarchy of Needs
- **Erik Erickson**: _______ vs. _________
- **David Elkind**: *The Power of Play (AOR)*
- **Howard Gardner**: Multiple Intelligences
- **Maxine Greene**: NYU philosophy of education
- **Who would YOU add??**
  
  What’s the point? None of it is new!!!
Have they reached the **Age Of Reason? (AOR)**

- **AOR required before formal schooling! RULES!**
  - Math has rules, grammar has rules, science has rules, etc. must be able to hold these rules in your head!

- **Indicators that a child has NOT yet entered the AOR:**
  - Still very literal in thought
  - Younger than 6/7
  - Still has baby teeth
  - Cannot draw or copy a diamond:
    - Drawing **vectors** means that a line can go in two directions; down/up and across/over.
  - Prefers one dimensional stories, the step-mother is **bad**, the sister is **good**, the dog is **naughty**, etc.
    - Winnie The Pooh = entering AOR
  - Doesn’t see that one thing can be 2 things at same time: the lady can be a mom **and** a teacher! Supermarket Syndrome