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History 3510

History Analysis Week 10

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The article, “Growing Up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario” by Robert Stamp examines the differences in curriculum from elementary to secondary and the gender specific programs that were offered in the latter. The author describes the elementary curriculum in a very positive way, “a place where children could live socially, where it was a joy to go, and where their interests and activities could be fully developed.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Interestingly, once the children progressed to higher grades there was a large shift to a more rigid style. However, with such an interesting disparity between the teachings, the author doesn’t examine the rationale. The first half of the article is broken into what was taught and how new information was integrated into each grade where specific historical content was also omitted. There are so many topics being addressed in this article which makes it is difficult to follow all the tangents the author explores. He shifts from discussing the different programs specific to primary and secondary students and then to the content that was taught, as the author states, “The new school readers of 1930s emphasized the present and future rather than the past, an idyllic world of smiling faces and happy people rather than stories of sorrow temptation and death.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Now, throughout the article the author briefly examines the gender specific programs offered to the girls versus the boys. The author deviates from the gender specific expectations by including a story on how a female teacher was not allowed to teach after she was married.[[3]](#footnote-3) This does shine a light on gender expectations and inequalities during this time, however, it’s another big topic on its own. The author does get back to examining the gender specific content geared towards both sexes, “the girls for home economics and boys for industrial arts or “shop.””[[4]](#footnote-4) The author also discusses the “proper” way to behave and project yourself which was a key element taught in elementary school. The author discusses how girls and boys did separate courses as given due to gender, teaching them at a young age of how the two genders should act, behave, and conform to certain gender roles in the future. The author should have stayed focused on these topics and given a little more insight to the reason behind the content, omission and why the different teaching styles from one that seemed progressive and open and then taken away to rigid and traditional. For example, “we marched from a progressive, activity-oriented playground into a traditional desks-in-straight-rows, sit-down-and-be-quiet 1940s Ontario elementary school”[[5]](#footnote-5) by ending the article with this statement, it gives emphasis on how the school curriculum was changing.

Unlike the previous author, Amy Von Heyking’s articles stay on point. Both articles examine different aspects of progressive education around child centered learning. The article

“Implementing Progressive Education in Alberta’s Rural Schools” examines the challenges faced by rural schools to put this type of education into practice. The author provides first-hand accounts and memoirs of those that were involved at the time which provides insight to issues and problems that they faced. For example, the lack of supplies and even the teachers themselves lacking a higher education were obstacles faced in these remote areas. The author examines these disadvantages through many primary sources that reiterate the difficulties faced in the rural areas. As the superintended states, “The present status of activity and group techniques is far from encouraging… We have neither the school plants, equipment nor competent teachers necessary for their successful application.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This clearly reiterates the authors points of the challenges faced in rural schools trying to implement a new curriculum. Her other article, “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-1953” which also focuses on child-centered learning but in relation to the educators and the importance of the curriculum. Again, the author provides insight through articles written during this time and that their objective was to make better people in society. The focus of the individuals working on implementing progressive education as they were trying to improve the different learning aspects within schools to benefit the children. McNally states, “By means of the ‘enterprise’ all the material included in the subjects mentioned above will be integrated and imparted in so interesting a fashion that it will seem more like a game than like the traditional Grades I and II.”[[7]](#footnote-7) This gives insight on the way in which children could learn with a more hands on method which would make a child’s school experience more positive.

Bibliography:

Stamp, M. Robert. “Growing Up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario,” *Historical Studies in Education*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2005): 187-198. <http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse-rhe/article/view/424/564>.

Heyking, Amy Von. “Implementing Progressive Education in Alberta’s Rural Schools,” *Historical Studies in Education*, (2012): 93-111. <http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse-rhe/article/view/4072/4322>.

Heyking, Amy Von. “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-1953,” in Sara Burke and Patrice Milewski (Eds.), *Schooling in Transition: Readings in the Canadian History of Education,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012: 340-354.

1. Robert M. Stamp, “Growing Up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario,” *Historical Studies in Education*, 17, no. 1 (2005): 188.

<http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse-rhe/article/view/424/564>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Amy Von Heyking, “Implementing Progressive Education in Alberta’s Rural Schools,” *Historical Studies in Education*, (2012): 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Amy Von Heyking, “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-1953,” *Schooling in Transition: Reading in the Canadian History of Education,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)