Influential Educators:

Why Are They Remembered And What Can Be Learned From Them?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the lives of seven educators and present a synopsis of their lives, educational beliefs, and how their practices are implemented in the modern classroom. The educators included are Socrates and Plato, Jesus Christ, Johann Pestalozzi, Fredrich Frobel, Maria Montessori, and Jamie Escalante. Each were considered great teachers of their time, and their practices be evaluated for effectiveness and then implemented into modern educational thinking.

The goal of addressing each educator individually is to look at what these educators have in common that all teachers should identify as effective practice. These commonalities may not be found in their methodologies and practices, but in the underlying beliefs of their roles as educators.

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The success of a classroom and the success of individual students are both dependent on the effectiveness of the everyday classroom teacher. The teacher is not only responsible for the content and knowledge taught, but for the entire atmosphere of the classroom. It seems a daunting task to be a teacher, but there are many examples in the field that teachers can use as models of exemplary teaching. By examining educators throughout time, whose methods have been documented and preserved, modern day teachers can see the success of an effective practice and model it. Each renowned educator brings vastly different practices and methods that have been shown successful. If there are commonalities among them, these should be identified as the most basic of teaching practices. The point of history is to learn from the mistakes of the past so they are not repeated. Educators should follow the same rule when it comes to the history of the field. By looking at the history of education and the teachers that have made their mark there, modern day teachers can implement successful practices of the past in the classrooms of today.

No matter their instructional tendencies, the most influential educators have the betterment of the student at the forefront of their thoughts. The driving force behind each of their philosophies was the fact that to succeed in life, one needed to learn. If one needed to learn, someone would have to teach them. This study predicts a common thread among all of these historical educators, despite drastically different teaching styles. Therefore, it is acceptable to look at aspects of each, derive from them a repertoire of several effective theories and practices, and implement them into daily teaching

activities. It would be impossible, impractical, and illogical to take each educational belief system in its entirety. It does make sense to take those characteristics for which they are considered the strongest and create a list of teaching tools based on the tried and true practices of educators that have gone before and made their mark in the field of education.

The Ancient Educators: Socrates and Plato

Socrates and Plato

Biographical information. Socrates was born in 469 B.C. and lived through the Peloponnesian War. His art in debate made him famous in his time. Today, he is chiefly recognized for being Plato's teacher. His teachings are mainly recorded in the writings of Plato, so it is often hard to separate the views of these two philosophers (Smith & Knapp, 2011). Evidence about his life outside of his role as a philosopher and teacher is sparse, but his death is well known and documented. While under arrest, Socrates poisoned himself with hemlock and dictated his experience to his pupils (Smith & Knapp, 2011). Plato went on from the teachings of Socrates to found The Academy, a university that practiced experiential learning (Smith & Knapp, 2011). Plato wrote *The Republic*, which he composed as a dialogue with Socrates as the chief speaker and orator of all dialogues found within the text (Bosanquet, 1917).

Educational beliefs. To these ancient educators, the purpose of the education of the young was simply to determine if pupils were worthy of further education as they got older. In the period of Plato and Socrates, the idea of "fair education for all" was unprecedented. They operated under the cultural norm that only certain people were worthy of an education. The main method by which they taught was through "elenchus,

meaning a way of asking questions that helps the interlocutor know what they know and do not know" (Smith & Knapp, 2011, p. 18). The Socratic Method, as it came to be known after the time of Socrates and Plato, can be seen very clearly in the famous allegory of the cave. Plato recorded Socrates' words thusly: "Let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened" (Smith & Smth, 1999, p. 16). Socrates presented most of his lessons to the learner in images; he invited his students to imagine a different reality with him. These images were usually symbolic for the philosophical beliefs that he was trying to impart to them. There was also a strong belief that the older generation had wisdom gained from life experience to pass on to the young:

> I delight in conversing with very old persons. For as they have gone before us on the road over which perhaps we also shall have to travel, I think we ought to try and learn from them what the nature of the road is,--whether it be rough and difficult, or smooth and easy. (Plato, 1908, p. 3)

Plato laid the groundwork for the idea of holistic education. He professed two branches of education: philosophical and physical "to ensure a proper harmony between energy and initiative on the one hand and reason on the other" (Smith & Knapp, 2011, p. 19). The whole person was important to success in learning. Reason may come from the development of the intellect, but with the development of the body comes the energy and discipline needed in study.

In the modern classroom. Trace marks of Socratic and Plationic education exist throughout the modern day classroom. Their use of dialogue and visual representation should continue to be employed as teachers strive to foster success in their student body.

With the increasing need for students to be well versed in visual interpretation, educators could learn from Socrates' ability to communicate effectively through visual images:

> Students are not necessarily proficient in using and interpreting visual displays. A U.S. study…that investigated the ability of students to use visuals indicated that the majority of 17-year-olds and young adults could perform only moderately well with visuals, and very few could perform adequately at more advanced levels. (Rakes, Rakes, & Smith, 1995, p. 46)

The implementation of visuals as often as possible in the classroom allows students to become more familiar with interpreting, discussing, and analyzing them. The abundant use of visual aids in expository writing necessitates the mastery of these abilities for students. The ability to interpret visuals increases reading comprehension levels (Rakes, Rakes, & Smith, 1995).

In addition to the use of vivid imagery in his teaching, Socrates was famous for teaching through The Socratic Method. This method was based on forcing the learners to develop their own ideas through the probing questions of the teachers.. Recent students have shown that questioning is an effective practice in the classroom: "Recent meta-analyses report large effect sizes that support the use of questioning as an instructional strategy" (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012, p. 52). Studies also show that the best questions focus on relevant information, use explicit cues, and are inferential and analytic in nature (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012). All of these characteristics existed in the questioning styles of Socrates, as his main goal was to bring his students to deeper levels of understanding and challenge their thinking. He believed teaching should be

done "in a way the change will most easily and most effectually be brought about" (Plato, 360 B.C.E, p. 241).

Religious Teaching: Jesus Christ's Teaching Methods

Jesus Christ

Biographical information. Few people recognize Jesus Christ as an "educator" because of His association with the Christian faith. However, in His own time, even those who did not believe He was the Son of God would never doubt He was a gifted teacher. John 1:38 records an account of an interaction between Christ and two disciples: "Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'" Fulvous Josephus, a famous Jewish historian, described Jesus of Nazareth thusly: "Now, there lived about this time Jesus, a wise man, If it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderfule works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure" (Bentwich, 1914, p. 16). Whenever He spoke or taught in public, crowds of people would flock to Him because He was an effective communicator. His birth story is well known in history through accounts in the Bible in the books of Matthew and Luke. The record that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a city in Judea, to Mary and Joseph. Very little is known about His childhood. Few accounts exist, but those that do have been labeled historically invalid and based solely on speculation (Zenos, 1895). When He was about thirty, Jesus began His ministry by traveling and teaching. During this time, He gathered followers, but His claim to be the Son of God caused dissension and unrest within the leadership of the Jewish community. This is evidenced by John 11:45-53, where the Jewish leaders begin making the plans to "put him to death." Those leaders brought Him before the Roman

government and sentenced Him to death. There are many biblical accounts of people seeing Christ after His death, and by those accounts, He told His followers to carry on His message of salvation before He ascended into heaven. This account is recorded in Acts 1: 8-9: "'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."

Educational practices. When Christ taught, he used parables or metaphorical stories to symbolize reality. He told a parable about a widow who was persistent in her desire to seek justice in Luke chapter 18: " to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1, ESV). Christ used these stories to amplify His teachings and solidify the concepts for His followers. Teaching through parables is the teaching method for which Jesus was most commonly known. There are many cases in Matthew 23 where individuals catalyze Christ's teachings by asking him a question. When they do, they address him as "teacher." A comprehensive view of His teaching style is evidenced by Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well, as recorded in John 4. The woman was coming to draw water, so to begin a conversation Christ asked her for a drink. In this instance, Jesus recognized and used a teachable moment, prompted her to conversation with a logical request, gained her attention at the onset, and used a conversational method. Throughout the rest of His interactions with this woman, He gave attention to the needs of an individual, taught by example using modeling, used culturally significant references, spoke in concrete terms, used contrast to clarify His point, employed motivation and called the learner to respond through action to His teaching

(Horne, 1998). Their actions and choices were the true display of the knowledge they gained. He did not allow idleness in learning.

The characteristics Christ displayed as a person were part of His effectiveness as an educator. People respected Him, and this allowed Him to build rapport with those He taught. Matthew 7: 28-29 states, "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." Christ taught what He knew and spoke his knowledge with authority; He never presented concepts in which He was not proficient. When interacting with people, He was always peaceful. Christ never displaying nervousness or the fear of losing control of a situation, and that confidence allowed His message to be clearly presented (McKoy, 1930). He continually displayed sincerity, tenderness, humility, joy, altruism, and intellect (McKoy,1930). All of these attributes were essential to the teaching setting and gave confidence to those who were taught by Christ. They knew they could trust what He was teaching them.

In the modern classroom. It is important for educators to remember that without the respect of the students, they have no foundation on which to teach. They need the students' respect and trust in order to create an environment that fosters learning and growth. For this to be accomplished in the classroom, it is necessary for teachers to examine their character and make sure that they are displaying respectable qualities: "No matter what we want our students to care about and what we want them to focus on, the truth is that they are continuously learning from who we are— or, more accurately, what our conditioning expresses about us when we teach" (Shindler, 2010, p. 40). Teachers cannot avoid their character impacting what is being taught in the classroom. The goal of the teacher is to foster success in others, making it a very altruistic practice. Being a

teacher for selfish gain leaves students in the wake of their instructor's ambitions. To teach without joy is to impart to students that learning is a boring and unworthy enterprise. From Christ, educators can see the impact of strong character and the place that it has in every teaching situation.

Methodologically speaking, it is important to note the significance of questioning in Jesus' teachings. Questioning is effective in assessing student understanding and guiding teacher planning. Questions that are asked to "display the ignorance of the pupil" (Wilson, 1974, p. 115) or infinite questions asked in succession are not beneficial to teacher or student. When Jesus posed questions to students, the intent of the question was to arouse interest, guide thoughts, or call for examination of those He was asking or the world around them (Wilson, 1974). Questions should prompt higher order thinking skills in order to serve the classroom most efficiently. Questioning is at the heart of classroom practice: "Questions are the ways that a classroom teacher helps students think creatively, critically and analytically" (Korkmaz, 2009, p. 513). Only higher order questions prompt higher order thinking:

> Several studies have shown greater levels of student achievement relating to the teacher's use of lower-level, concrete questions, but other studies have supported the benefits of higher-level questions in encouraging student achievement. This variance in results suggests the importance of a variety of question types to meet student needs and support student learning. (Korkmaz, 2009, p. 515)

Jesus also employed an "activity method" of learning that allowed diversity in instruction and hands-on learning experiences (Wilson, 1974, p. 131). Employing storytelling, demonstrations, programmed instruction and team teaching are all practices

that emulate the methods of Christ. Storytelling and demonstration provides students with concrete experiences on which to base further learning. Programmed instruction is a process by which students can learn in "a sequence of logical steps, without making a large number of errors" (Wilson, 1974, p. 144). This instruction also calls for the active response of the student, immediate confirmation of the instructor and self-pacing and monitoring of the student (Wilson, 1974). Self-pacing has been proved an effective practice by modern research:

> Students choose what to study, how to study, when to study, and how long to study; these self-regulated aspects of learning have important implications for the effectiveness of their learning efforts and achievement in education. Recent research on the effectiveness of self-controlled study has revealed beneficial effects of allowing subjects choice about which items to re-study and how to schedule re-study. (Benjamin & Tullis, 2011, p. 103)

With an effective use of programmed instruction, teachers are proactive in facilitating growth and learning in their students.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Educators

Johann Pestalozzi

Biographical information. Johann Pestalozzi was born in Zurich, Switzerland in the year 1746 and graduated from the University of Zurich as a student of law. He believed that education began with a mother's love. Because of that belief, he opened an orphanage and taught the children there under the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau. The orphanage was only in operation for five years, but his experience there led him to focus on improving the state of education (Smith & Knapp, 2011). Pestalozzi's childhood

was focused on philanthropy and living to help others (Anderson, 1970). His ideals behind his desire to improve education for those less fortunate stemmed from his idea that really helping people, meant equipping others to help themselves. Pestalozzi remarked that "deeds of charity with which people tried to combat these evils, instead of removing them, only stimulated their growth and that the only effective means of overcoming them consisted in developing and vitalizing the power originally innate in every man of satisfying his needs" (Anderson, 1970, p. 99). His most famous work on education was entitled *How Gertrude Teaches her Children* in which he outlined his "psychological method of instruction" (Smith & Knapp, 2011, p. 29). After the publication of this work, Pestalozzi established another private school in Yverden, Switzerland. This school, with the implementation of holistic education, was very successful and even drew the attention of Fredrich Froebel, who, obviously influenced by Pestalozzi's research and study, went on to found kindergarten (Smith & Knapp, 2011). Pestalozzi retired to farm life after the close of the school in Yverdon, and died at the age of eighty.

Educational beliefs. Educational historians label Pestalozzi as the founder of holistic education. He opposed the education system of the time and begins *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* by saying: "I saw popular instruction like a bottomless swamp before my eyes; and waded round and round with difficulty in its mire until at last I learned to know the sources of its waters" (Pestalozzi, 1898, p. 29). He promoted it and developed it past any idea that Plato had ever perceived. Pestalozzi was the first to consider the needs of the child as a whole rather than just the development of the intellect (Smith & Kanpp, 2011): "A child is perfectly educated if he has learned to take care of

what will later on belong to him, to keep it in order, and to make use of it for the welfare of those belonging to him" (Pinloche, 1901, p. 123). Education served the purpose to develop children into individuals that could provide for their own needs. Part of Pestalozzi's method for doing this entailed showing genuine care for the students as people and seeking to love them as they were. It was the responsibility of the educational setting to provide "the extension, the immediate development, the quickening, and the determining of the sentiments of gratitude and love which the baby already feels when satisfied, refreshed, and caressed" (Pinloche, 1901, p. 134). If children were confident in the love that the instructor displayed, they would then be empowered to complete the tasks necessary for life.

This manifested itself in Pestalozzi's own teaching practices that included "field trips, group work, and ability grouping that allowed for the accommodation of individual differences and group work" (Smith & Knapp, 2011, p. 29). He served as a guide who encouraged the students and prompted them to answer what he believed were the essential questions of learning: "Number, form, and language are the means of rendering all perceptions clear and distinct" (Pinloche, 1901, p. 229). These were the main concepts from which all other learning developed.

In the modern classroom. The movement in the modern day classroom towards differentiated instruction seems only natural due to the individualistic nature of modern day thinking. When Pestalozzi was developing his theories, the individualistic and holistic approaches to education were unheard of and substantial challenges to the ideas surrounding and influencing him. It is important to follow Pestalozzi's methods of individualized learning. The book *A+ Educators* is a compilation of the stories of

successful educators. Their beliefs about education, and their philosophies as educators all center on the idea that the individual learner needs individualized instruction in order to succeed (Howe, 2009). Brittany Ray is quoted saying, “In my classroom, the most dominant element of my philosophy is to meet each student at his or her own level and move forward (Howe, 2009, p. 91). Betsy Ross says that she strives to provide “children with experiences that assist in developing the whole child. The teacher must acknowledge the varying pace of each child's’ development” (Howe, 2009, p. 1).

Any method that seeks to provide concrete experiences that “put into human activity the child’s human instincts and call into action his human senses” (Pinloche, 1901, p. 188) has a root in Pestalozzi’s beliefs and practices. Group learning experience and the push for cooperative learning are modern day representations of Pestalozzi’s beliefs. Current research shows that the cooperative learning strategy “is grounded in the theory that learning can be maximized through well-designed, intentional social interactions with others” (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012, p. 37). Groups that showed greater indication of increased learning due to group work were smaller groups where cooperative learning strategies were used consistently and systematically (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012). Educators should plan carefully when implementing group work in their classrooms. Social learning is very beneficial when used properly and monitored to ensure that all students remain involved in the learning process. The last thing that a teacher would want would be for a student to fade into obscurity in a group because of another student’s dominant personality.

Fredrik Frobel

Biographical information. In a letter to the Duke of Meiningem, Froebel wrote about his childhood. His father served as the village pastor and his mother passed away in his infancy. When his father remarried, Frobel's stepmother showed no affection towards him and he felt like she treated him "like an utter stranger" (Michaelis & Moore, 1889, p. 4). He spent his childhood confined within the boundaries of the hedges and fences that enclosed his home (Snider, 1900). His father taught him how to read, and then he studied at the village public school (Michaelis & Moore, 1889).While in his early childhood, his uncle Hoffman came for a visit and took Fredrick to live with him. His experience with his uncle was quite the contrary to his experience at home. He experienced freedom and trust while under his uncle's care (Snider, 1900). He lived there until 1797, when he was "apprenticed to a forester" for two years (Snider, 1900, p. 17). When he was seventeen, he attended the University of Jena in Germany. He flourished there in his philosophical studies, but mostly because of the influence of the other university students rather than the classes the university provided (Snider, 1900). In 1803, he became a land surveyor. While Fredrick worked as a forester, his uncle died and Fredrik began traveling. While traveling in Switzerland, he met Johann Pestalozzi and studied under him for a period before he became a teacher at the Model School (Froebel, Autobiography of Friedrich Froebel, 1889). In 1839, he opened the first kindergarten in Germany. This would be his most significant contribution to the educational system. Froebel died just thirteen years later in1852 (Jeynes, 2007).

Educational beliefs. Frobel's own writings on his educational beliefs are extensive. He gave credence to the family as the basis of education: "In the family the

child grows up to boyhood and pupilage; therefore, the school must link itself to the family. The union of the school and of life, of domestic and scholastic life, is the first and indispensable requisite of a perfect human education of this period" (Frobel, 1887, p. 230). In order for the school to be an effective entity in the child's life, teachers must consider the child's life at home, use those experiences that the student already knows, and incorporate them into education. This was contrary to the general beliefs of his time, and the educational practices characterized by rigor and formality. Despite difference in method, Frobel agreed with the generally accepted purpose of education. It was a means to foster a relationship with God, and there were always spiritual undertones to his ideas and practices. Frobel (1887) expressed this idea in his own words:

> Furthermore, the school points out the inner tendencies and relations among individual things and objects, and thus rises to ever higher generality and spirituality. Therefore, the boy, when he enters school, leaves the external view of things and enters upon a higher spiritual view of them." (p. 128)

Frobel developed his educational theories through a religious lens. This development is reflected in his use of words like "divine" and "inner law" in his educational writings. Frobel (1826) states in his work *Die Nenschenerziehung (On The Education of Man)*:

> The purpose of education is to encourage and guide man as a conscious, thinking and perceiving being in such a way that he becomes a pure and perfect representation of that divine inner law through his own personal choice; education must show him the ways and meanings of attaining that goal. (p. 2)

In a more practical sense, Frobel developed his educational practices by identifying characteristics he believed were essential to the growth and development of children.

These are: self-activity, connectedness and unbroken continuity, creativeness, physical activity, and happy and harmonious surroundings (Smith, Slight, & O.B. Priestman, 1953). He allowed students to learn independently and believed in the importance of learning through play. When a child was interacting with play, he was forming the habits that were essential to work: "A child is directing himself; he sets himself a task and carries it through" (Smith, Slight, & O.B. Priestman, 1953, p. 135). This was the basis for his development of the kindergarten classroom. Young children deserved a school environment that met their needs as explorers and discoverers. The instructor facilitated the child's natural tendency to play in such a way that it promotes growth and learning in the student. Frobel was always interested in the purpose of education to train men who were independent and could think for themselves (Smith, Slight, & O.B. Priestman, 1953). Frobel encouraged practices in the classroom that students already did independently and taught them how to create learning in any and every situation.

In the modern classroom. Frobel founded the kindergarten classroom, so his contributions to the development of young children altered the entire training concept for elementary education. Frobel, along with Pestalozzi, believed in the importance of education through play and allowing younger children to be in a free and informal environment. This environment allowed them to explore freely the world around them:

> "The child who can play well can also work well; that the habits of work are formed in play, for then a child is directing himself; he sets himself a task and carries it through. There is, or should be, opportunity for richer and more stimulating play at school than at home. (Smith, Slight, & O.B. Priestman, 1953, p. 135)

When planning instruction, teachers should consider the natural tendencies of the children they are instructing. Based on that consideration, the things the students do naturally should be used as an instructional advantage. Teaching is not about removing the nature of the child and then filling that void with knowledge. Teaching is about taking those things that children do naturally—explore, play, guess, question—and directing those tendencies so children gain knowledge and develop critical thinking skills.

Maria Montessori

Biographical information. Maria Montessori was born in Italy in the year 1870 to a politically involved family. Her father was a successful government official and her mother was a very patriotic, well-educated woman (Smith & Knapp, 2011). At the age of thirteen, Maria entered a technical school and graduated in 1886. After that, she went on to another school to study engineering and continued her education even further by attending medical school (Smith & Knapp, 2011). This was unheard of during her time, and she was the exception to the rule that only men attended university. Despite the unique nature of her situation, Montessori was very successful there, and was continually recognized for her high level of scholarship. She was given funds to continue her education (Kramer, 1976).

When Montessori turned her interests towards the field of education, she was already a celebrated intellectual and medical doctor. She audited classes on pedagogy and read the significant works of educational theory (Kramer, 1976). She was made director of a school that was "a medical-pedagogical institute, to train teachers in the care and education of deficient children, with a practice-demonstration school in which twenty-two young pupils were enrolled" (Kramer, 1976, p. 86). In 1901, Montessori left the

school with the hopes of learning more about the education of children without special needs. Her departure could have also been driven by a tense relationship with a college professor with whom she had her son (Kramer, 1976). For four years, she was an instructor in the Pedagogic School at the University of Rome. After that, she began working in the *Casa di Bambini* (House of Children) and her success there with the education of poor children made a name for her in the United States (Kramer,1976). Montessori continued developing her educational methods and putting them into practice, developing approaches and procedures for children of all ages, from prenatal to age eighteen (Maria Montessori, M.D., 2012). Before Montessori died, she left everything to her son and called upon him to finish the work she had begun (Kramer, 1976).

Educational beliefs. The Montessori Method is thoroughly developed and very specific. This method should be implemented in its holistic nature. This lead to the creation of private Montessori schools that follow the Montessori Method. The method is centered on the repetition of foundational concepts to then scaffold students to more complex problems: "The way to teach a skill was not by having the child repeatedly try it, but by having him repeat an exercise that prepared him for it" (Kramer, 1976, p. 90). Because knowledge builds upon itself, having students repeat an activity done in preparation for further learning will strengthen the foundation on which they can construct new learning. The lessons given are individual, short and simple. They require a high level of objectivity. Montessori goes as far as to say that the "personality of the teacher shall disappear" in order for the child to focus on the object of the lesson (Montessori, 1912, p. 108). This methodology completely removes the existence of whole group lessons. The goal of the lesson is to observe the child and determine if he

can formulate an explanation of the object. If he cannot, it is the role of the teacher to prompt him to repeat the lesson and make sure the student does not feel as though he has made a mistake (Montessori, 1912).

The method is completely learner driven and only requires observation from the teacher because students are, seeking knowledge by nature:

> Given the fact that, through the regime of liberty the pupils can manifest their natural tendencies in the school, and that with this in view we have prepared the environment and the materials, the teacher must not limit her action to observation, but must proceed to experiment. In this method the lesson corresponds to an experiment. (Montessori, 1912, p. 107)

The successes of the experiments depend on "the intimate relationship between the observer and the individual being observed" (Montessori, 1912, p. 12). Observation is key to the implementation of the Montessori Method. If the educator is not thoroughly observing students, then the teacher will not gain knowledge about the students' learning process.

In the modern classroom. Montessori believed that "work, the systematic mastery of the environment, met an innate need of the developing human being from the earliest age and was the key to both individual development and the progress of civilization" (Kramer, 1976, p. 63). Individual work and self-guided instruction are both effective methods that teachers should employ in the classroom. Teachers can permit students various freedoms in content and assessment by allowing students to consider what they desire to learn and to display their mastery of a skill in the way that they see fit.

When instructors prompt students to self-evaluate and allow students to dialogue through their thinking processes, they are developing self-guided learning that Montessori prized.

Remembering that part of the role of the teacher is to observe is an effective practice to derive from Montessori's theories. It is important for the instructor to elicit the use of observation as a helpful teaching tool. Allowing students to answer questions or complete activities without interruption or prompting is a true formative assessment in which teachers can see what the student does and does not know as an individual learner. Observation journals can be an easy way for teachers to record student progress and plan for future learning.

From Pestalozzi, Frobel and Montissori

The same fundamental idea and implementation of a more dynamic style of came from the educators of this period. The results of modern research indicate that they were all correct in their forward way of thinking: "When compared with students in the control group who were involved in more traditional activities, such as completing worksheets and answering short response questions…kinesthetic activity helped students in the experimental group make greater achievement gains" (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012, p. 65-66). Any activity that takes students beyond the lower levels of thinking and processing is beneficial to creating enriching learning environments that foster greater gains than "traditional" teaching methods.

Modern Educator

Jamie Escalante

Biographical information. Jamie Escalante was born in La Paz, Bolivia in 1930. His parents were both teachers in an Aymara Indian village. Escalante himself taught in

Bolivia for nine years, and then came to the United States. In the states, he worked various jobs while earning teaching credentials and a degree in mathematics. After gaining all his degrees, he taught in the classroom for twenty-four years (National Educators Hall of Fame). Jamie Escalante's story was made famous by the movie *Stand and Deliver.* The film was based on his experiences in 1982, when a group of minority students was suspected of cheating due to their high achievement on the AP Calculus test (National Educators Hall of Fame). His educational fame lies in his ability to motivate and encourage students beyond what they perceive as their limits. After leaving the teaching field, he became the host of the PBS show "Futures," that explored careers that focused on the disciplines of math and science (National Educators Hall of Fame).

Educational beliefs. Jamie Escalante was a teacher who believed in doing whatever was necessary for the success of his students. He operated under the presumption that all students could learn, as long as they had a force behind them encouraging them to do better. He called upon teachers to "demand more than they [the students] think they have to give" (Matthews, 1988, p. 288). He desired teachers to "spend every moment convincing them that they can do it, if they simply make the effort" (Matthews, 1988, p. 288). The role of the teacher is that of a coach. A teacher is in the classroom to encourage students to do their best and be their best. Escalante was not known for passivity or a calm polite nature. He was harsh with his co-workers and administrators for the sake of improving situations for his students (Matthews, 1988).

To Escalante, the purpose of education was to equip the next generation with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach the next generation. Education is cyclical, and produces a pattern of give and take:

> I see it this way: each generation must plant a tree for the next generation. Education is the water that produces fruit on the tree, and each child plucks this fruit, which is knowledge. But each generation must also work as a unit and cooperate to nurture the tree and to make life better for the next generation. And so on. (Novak, 1993, para. 23)

When asked about his teaching methods, Escalante did not give any specifics. He simply said that he taught in ways that worked and examined every method that came his way before implementing them in his classroom (Escalante, 2010). He focused on proximity to the students in many ways: "I abandoned unworkable ideas and came to understand the importance of becoming much more communicative with the students and not simply working at the blackboard all day" (Escalante, 2010, para. 30). Not only did he seek to move around the classroom to create a more dynamic learning space, but he also chose to connect with the students by using humor in his classroom: "While I teach respect and discipline and I demand a great deal of hard work from my students, I always try to do it in a way that is fun. I use toys, tell lots of jokes, and let the kids participate" (Escalante, 2010, para. 36).

In the classroom. A common criticism of the program Escalante developed was that any other educator could not implement the program because it depended solely on his dynamic personality. This claim, he states, "shows how far away we have drifted from the fundamentals of teaching" (Escalante, 2010, para. 31). The main push behind his teaching practice is to effectively motivate the students to reach their fullest potential. Providing that motivation in the classroom calls for dynamic and entertaining teaching. Teachers are always competing for the attention of students because there are so many

other variables vying for students' attention. Media is more readily accessible than ever before and students are continually less and less inclined to participate in face-to-face interactions. There is a need for some sort of entertainment in the classroom, simply because students are a product of their culture. It is not that any entertainment factor should overshadow the content being taught, but teachers should seek to create excitement for their students to draw and maintain their interest. Practically speaking, teachers should employ humor and role-play into content lessons and allow for causal dialogue between students and teachers. If teachers expect their students achieve at high levels and demand the students' best work, trust is necessary between classmates as well as between students and teachers.

The Common Dominators

There are several aspects of each educator's philosophy and methodology that are closely related to one another and rooted in the same foundation. Each teacher displayed a passion for his or her occupation and a desire to enrich the lives of children. They all sought to do this for various reasons. Some saw it as a responsibility to society and others saw it as a responsibility to the individual, but each sought to make a change in education for the sake of making it a more meaningful experience. Plato and Socrates sought to foster deeper thinking in society for the betterment of the individual. Christ taught his followers with the intention of fostering growth in the individual that led to service to others. Pestalozzi and Frobel made their stand in education on the bases of improving the young man in order to improve the society. Montessori and Escalante sought to empower the individual for the sake of the individual's own personal growth. Regardless of the

manner they saw fit do it in or the reasoning behind their practice, each educator saw the student as a person who could be improved through education.

These teachers sought to push students to become independent thinkers. A spoon-fed education is one that will not last. Through the Socratic Method and dialogue, the ancient educators fostered a level of critical thinking that challenged the students' beliefs and drove them to find support for their own conclusions. Christ would prompt his disciples and followers to examine themselves and would often ask hard questions that demanded a response. Frobel and Pestalozzi both based their methods on the individual and his natural tendencies. Their methods, along with Montessori, call the students to discover through their own observation and experimentation. When students are asked to take an object they are seemingly "playing with" and make connections to the world around them, this requires deep levels of thinking and interpretation. Students under these educators were not simply prompted to think for themselves, they were demanded to think for themselves.

These historical educators were also not afraid to challenge the thinking of their time in order to meet the needs of the students they were teaching: "That Jesus did not acquire his method in teaching from any of the then existing schools is evidenced by the fact that both the substance of what he taught, and the method by which it was presented differed radically from anything that could be found within the confines of the native land" (McKoy, 1930, p. 33). This can be said about Christ and it can be said about the other educators that have made their mark on history. Fredrich Frobel founded kindergarten; this educational advancement would have never existed had he not been willing to stand against the idea that children as young as five did not need to be a part of

a formal learning system. Montessori Schools today are still radically different from "normal" education. The founder saw the children as vessels that could guide and direct their own learning, with little influence from the teacher, or as she would say, "observer." Pestalozzi was concerned with the holistic development of the child, rather than just the intellect and factual knowledge. Escalante took firm stands against the hidden prejudice of the educational system and fought for fairness for his students. The setting in which each educator challenged his or her culture's way of thinking was individualized because of differing time periods and locations, but each spoke out against ineffective practices and sought to foster change and improve the education of students.

Conclusion

Let it not be said that educators in America sat on the sidelines while the educational system—which is so dependent on teachers' passions and work—failed the students they were serving. By looking at the practices of master teachers, other educators can become masters in their field: "Master teachers have the competence, life experience, and compassion to achieve a tripartite goal of teaching content, increasing the student's capacity by nurturing self-confidence and self-knowledge, and guiding the student's discovery of meaning in their life" (Chapin, 2009, p. 47). When teachers strive to enrich the learning process for their students, foster an environment of higher-level independent thinking, and strive for improvement and development for the sake of their students, then a fundamental step has been taken towards making the classroom an effective learning environment.

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