

Pre-School Education and Different Approaches That Emerged in Historical Development

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Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v9i3p217

Abstract: The history of pre-education is quite recent. In fact, in order for this education to start, it was necessary to wait for the formal education to spread to the whole society. Pre-school education, which emerged and designed to meet the needs of post-industrial societies, gave importance to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of students. Especially the educational needs of post-war societies also required pre-school education. In this context, three different approaches to pre-school education have emerged. The common point of these approaches is that they adopt a democratic education model and reject the authoritarian teacher role in the traditional education model. Thus, a reflection of humanity's democratization adventure in the modern age has also shown itself in education models.

Keywords: Pre-School Education, Approaches to Pre-School Education, Waldorf Approach, Montessori Approach, Reggio Emilia Approach

1. Introduction

Education is one of the concepts that modern people describe as indispensable. As the spread of education to the whole society is a new phenomenon in the history of humanity, it is seen that pre-school education, which is a result of this, has become widespread later on. The prevalence of pre-school education in all societies has some reasons specific to modern society. Today's societies have realized the importance of pre-school education more. However, the emergence of some educational models and the shaping of preschool education are quite new stories for human history. The development adventure and principles of these schools are the subject of this study.

2. Pre-School Education

The spread of formal education to the whole society is a situation that has emerged with modern times. Especially in the 19th and 20th centuries after the enlightenment, important steps were taken in this regard. The spread of education to the whole society and its spread to childhood period was the result of a better

Received: June 27, 2022

Accepted: August 14, 2022

Celik, B., & Bilgin, R. (2022). Pre-School Education and Different Approaches That Emerged in Historical Development. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 9(3), 217-227.

understanding of the importance of education in a sense. After it was seen that education provided important contributions to young individuals and that people were more beneficial to societies with the education received in this way, education was expanded to young ages. In addition, it was aimed to create the human type needed by modern societies after the industrial revolution through education (Paprotna, 2018).

Changing people's behavior in the desired direction is described as learning. It has been revealed by research especially in modern times that this learning is most effective during childhood (Fazey et al., 2007). Therefore, primary school education has been made compulsory in the modern world in many countries.

One of the innovations that the modern world has brought to human life is the diversification of working life. Constantly growing economies and developing city life have also changed social life significantly. All these changes were also reflected in family life. There are significant differences in the modern family type compared to the traditional one. For example, in the traditional family type, the division of labor was made as a requirement of the social life. The work to be done among family members was distributed according to gender and age (Amin, 2002). Moreover, while modern society has eliminated these differences, it has transformed the concept of division of labor in ancient times into the concept of cooperation in modern times. This cooperation has led to the need for family members to collaborate in working life, regardless of gender. However, child workforce, one of the basic needs of the old times, has become an unacceptable situation in the modern era because the education and schooling of children in the modern world has emerged as a basic requirement as well as a legal obligation. In this case, it is seen that the parents participating in the workforce also meet the basic needs of their children. In accordance with the new social structuring that has emerged in the modern world, while adults are generally active in business life without gender discrimination, children have entered education processes (Christensen & Grönvall, 2011).

One of the issues that this way of life compelled people has been the care of children under primary school age. As a result of this necessity, pre-school education started to become widespread. In this case, we see that pre-school education emerges as a social necessity before the benefits it brings to children (Kapci & Guler, 1999).

We see that human societies are in need of education more than ever in modern times. The right education that children receive makes great contributions to both their own future and the future of the society. Due to this importance of education, pre-school education has been added to the primary school education that starts with the age of 7 in modern times. Behind the inclusion of pre-school education in social life is the need of the modern age, as well as the realization that childhood is a critical period for human education. It has been understood that preschool ages are much more effective than other periods in all kinds of development of children. In this critical period, children's psychomotor, cognitive, psycho-social, linguistic and affective or emotional developments occur faster and more effectively than in all other periods. In addition, the character traits that children acquire in this period are much more effective than the traits gained in other periods. All of this happens very effectively, especially in the 0-6 age group. Understanding all this has made pre-school education even more valuable (Hensch, 2005).

All these requirements, on the one hand, caused the pre-school education to become more widespread in the society, on the other hand, it caused its institutionalization. Academic studies emphasizing the importance of pre-school education and political processes that brought this issue to the fore were influential behind this widespread and institutionalization (Foley et al., 2000).

Other developments that increase the importance of pre-school education have emerged in modern times. It has been realized that much more positive results will be obtained if developmental problems such as mental problems, specific learning difficulties, hyperactivity, and dyslexia, which are frequently seen in children, are solved at this age. In addition, it has been realized that pre-school education has a critical importance in overcoming these problems. More importantly, the realization of the above-mentioned problems usually occurs with the transition to academic life. Therefore, these problems in children were usually discovered in primary school years. However, the primary school period may be too late to overcome these problems. Preschool periods are the periods when these will be discovered and treated most effectively. However, the understanding of this emerges when children do academic studies. Preschool education plays an important role in the discovery of these problems that are likely to arise in children (Shaywitz et al., 2008).

3. Aims of Pre-school Education

There are some features that distinguish pre-school education from formal school education. Especially as the target people, children of this age have very different needs from other age groups. Therefore, the education for them should have a set of specific goals. These purposes can be grouped under some headings.

1. **Social Aims:** One of the biggest innovations that the modern world has brought to human life is that people participate in business life regardless of gender differences within the family. In this case, working mothers of children are looking for new alternatives to look after the children. In the modern age, pre-school education institutions have been institutionalized in many ways to meet this need. Therefore, the primary purpose of these institutions is to take care of children whose parents are working. In addition, it is the duty of these institutions to provide education appropriate to the ages and mental capacities of children (Dereli-Iman, 2014). The social development that children show at this age is quite critical compared to other ages. Therefore, helping and supporting the development of children in this regard is one of the main aims of pre-school education. In addition, one of the main social objectives is to create an environment that will enable these children to socialize with the people around them and their friends and to support them in this regard. Socialization of children during this period is of vital importance for them and has the potential to positively affect their future education (Turunen et al., 2012).
2. **Educational Aims:** The educational curriculum of pre-school education is quite different from formal education. Since they are too young to get normal education, it is different for them in the way that these children learn colors, sound, shapes, aesthetics...etc. As a result, pre-school education aims to teach such things to children of these ages, and this was determined to be the educational aim of preschool education (Niikko & Ugaste, 2012).
3. **Developmental aims:** These children are at very critical ages as far as their physical, psychological and mental development. In these three domains, their crucial developments take place at these ages.

They learn to improve their mental and analytical skills through the exercises designed for their ages, and they learn to socialize with their friends and some other values like sharing with others very effectively at these ages. They also improve their physical skills like strengthening their muscles for writing and other activities. These are all cared with attention for these children in preschool education, and their development is provided in the institutions (Delgoshaei & Delavari, 2012).

4. Importance of Pre-school Education

This period, in which the healthy development of children will take place effectively, will be handled efficiently by making the necessary practices. For a healthy development, activities for children should be carried out in accordance with their abilities and ages. In addition, in order to do all these effectively, an institutional structure and well-designed activities are needed. All kinds of activities to be directed to children at this age should be designed by experts and should be given by teachers who know the methods well. It is almost impossible for the parents to do these activities at home even when they are not working. Professional approaches, one of the most basic needs of the modern world, cannot be developed and applied by the family. The existence of pre-school institutions is necessary for their implementation and for the healthy development of children. In addition, according to the age characteristics of children, cognitive, affective and psychomotor development in the necessary order requires a professional approach. It is almost impossible to do all this in an amateur manner. In this regard, there will be many deficiencies in the education to be given outside of pre-school institutions. These children also need love and attention. Moreover, they need compassion, and they are vulnerable to all effects coming from around them. Taking all these into consideration, they need education in which all these aspects are to be calculated meticulously. To realize all these aims is only possible in a professional approach and institutionalization. All of these highlight the importance of pre-school education (Keenan & Shaw, 1997).

5. Approaches to Pre-school Education

As educating the whole population of children became an item of the agenda after the enlightenment movements and developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, the idea of pre-school education is also new thing to human life. Even more, pre-school education developed later than formal primary school education. The history of pre-school education only dates back to 100 years ago or so, and it was even not an issue for social life. Even more, people considered the children as not ordinary citizens or people having normal rights in the society during Middle Ages. As people saw the children as important individuals of the society in modern times, they started to develop the idea of education for children. Even more, pre-school education became part of social life as a result of valuing children (Turdieva, 2021).

The industrial revolution came with many changes to the whole world. In this period, with the transition of factories to mass production, the need for labor has increased more than ever. To meet this need, children are included in the workforce. At that time, there were significant compelling reasons for the inclusion of children in the workforce. One of them was that child labor was relatively cheap compared to adults. Since the harm that the use of children as workers at a young age will bring to the society is seen more clearly, the law prohibited the use of children as labor force. The problems that arose during the period when children were included in the workforce gained a new dimension when some later saw that

there was a need to make some changes on this issue. Thus, the education of children has come to the fore and the subject has been expanded to pre-school education in the process (Weiner, 1991). After a while, pre-school education started to become widespread and different approaches emerged about how pre-school education should be.

6. Waldorf Approach

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the founder of this approach, took courses on mathematics, chemistry and natural sciences throughout his education life. At the same time, Steiner was also interested in philosophy. Later, his interest in philosophy began to focus on the philosophy of education. When he focused on how children's education should be and related philosophy, the idea of preparing an education program on this issue came to the fore. This focus has turned into a more specific form and concentrated on points that traditional education methods do not pay attention to. In this context, he determined that the importance given to the cognitive development of students in traditional education was insufficient. In the system he developed, he divided the development of students into three categories as academic, artistic and practical skills (Faizi et al., 2020).

In the next step, he divided the developmental processes of children into three separate periods. He evaluated the childhood period from the birth of the child to the age of 7 as the first period, and between the ages of 8 and 14 as the second period. He defined the most recent period as the adolescence period, which covers the ages of 15 and 21 (Van Alphen, 2011).

At the point where he focused on his early childhood, he came up with quite remarkable ideas for that time. For example, he underlined that the first period of childhood should be the development period of children's hand and foot muscles and claimed that the best way of learning for children in this period will emerge by imitation. He even stated that imitation should be a basic training method in this development period. Therefore, he wanted children to discover nature and believed that children should establish new social relationships. Therefore, he directed the children to reinforcing activities and thus asked them to expand their imagination. Believing in the importance of students' emotional development, he directed them to play-based activities and thus tried to ensure the emotional development of children through solidarity and cooperation with other children. He also stated that game-based activities will not only improve their emotional development, but also their cognitive and physical development in the best way (Adams, 2005).

He thought that the period in which children's imaginations develop best is the 8-14 age range, and he stated that this period is also a critical period for emotional development. That's why fairy tales and fables have an important place in his school curriculum, and he sincerely believed in their importance in the development of children's imagination. In addition, he emphasized the importance of mythological narratives and biographies of some historical figures and stated that they are necessary in children's education. Teachers who adopt this approach have found it necessary to perform storytelling, demonstration with drama method, activities involving rhythmic movements and visual arts accompanied by music for students. According to this approach, teachers play an active role, and in a sense, replace the parents of the children. Therefore, teachers are responsible for the moral and academic development of children (Uhrmacher, 1995).

This approach also underlined the point that the cognitive aspects of children develop during the adolescence period. It stated that during this period, children learn abstract thinking, develop their judgment skills and critical thinking skills. It also stated that young individuals need a great deal of autonomy in this period (Bjørnholt, 2014).

This approach, which determines the curriculum in accordance with the developmental periods of children, tried to respond to the needs of children starting from the early childhood period. In addition, in this education model, children are not in a position as determined by traditional education methods. In this context, it did not see children as passive recipients and cared about the active participation of children in the educational processes. We can say that the most important aspect of this approach that differs from traditional education methods is that it does not only focus on the cognitive and academic development of children. Thus, it gave importance to the development of children's affective and psychomotor aspects.

There are some methods and philosophical approaches for the correct functioning of this educational approach. We can summarize these principles as follows.

1. Schools that have adopted this approach should enroll children regardless of their religion, race, social status, economic status.
2. These schools should not be financially and politically dependent on the state they are in. As a requirement of this, a democratic culture must be established within the school.
3. Schools that have adopted this understanding should act in accordance with the curriculum of the countries in which they are located.
4. In these schools, education starts from pre-school period and continues uninterruptedly until graduating from high school. In the next period, children decide what to do because they are grown individuals.
5. The administrators of these schools should also be chosen from among the teachers, and the administrators should not have any status differences against other teachers.
6. Only one teacher should attend the lessons of the children in the first 8 years of education. Thus, the teacher gets to know the children in all their aspects.
7. Since each child has different tendencies and skills from the other, it is necessary to deal with these children separately and develop these skills.
8. Since the developmental stages follow a rational order, the education given to children should be in this order.
9. Evaluation of children in these schools is not for the purpose of grading. On the contrary, the aim should be to know the child better and to follow his development better. Children do not receive any grades or report cards during primary school years. These only happen during the high school years. The assessment made by the teachers should be to encourage the student (Kurtulmuş, 2016).

7. Montessori Approach

This approach was developed by Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Maria Montessori, a gynecologist, lived in Italy. However, contrary to her profession, she made great contributions to the field of education. She has particularly focused on children with special educational needs. After her studies on these children yielded good results, she stated that these methods should also be applied to children with normal

development. She opened schools named as "Casa dei Bambini" to realize these ideas. These schools appealed to families with low socioeconomic incomes located around Rome (Martin, 2002).

Montessori approach stated that child development takes place in a constructivist way. In this respect, it formed its philosophy in a different line from the mainstream education models of that time. This approach was actually similar to John Dewey's constructivist theory. In this context, it was seen that children are encouraged to learn on their own. For the implementation of this approach, it was deemed necessary to create an environment suitable for children. In this context, it envisaged the creation of an environment that would support child development. In addition, this approach adopted a child-centered education. For the development of the child, this approach considered it necessary to give education appropriate to their age and characteristics. For the development of children, it was required that their own experiences contribute to the student in the natural environment (Holland, 2016).

This approach did not see the traditional way of transferring knowledge from teacher to student appropriate. In addition to the cognitive development of the student, he also gave great importance to the psychological development of the student. In this context, "calmness, clarity, courage, compassion, wonder, joy, creativity and playfulness" have been seen as important concepts in the development of children (Smith, 2013).

We can list the principles of the Montessori approach as follows:

1. Respect for the child: children's developmental stages are different from each other. Children tend to develop different abilities, as well as different characteristics. Therefore, each of the children should be considered as an individual and education should be given to them within this framework.
2. Absorbent Mind: While the minds of adults acquire information, it is quite different in children's minds. This approach asserts that their minds absorb information instead of acquiring. In fact, this gives the logical explanation why children learn a language much faster than adults. For this reason, children continuously learn new things, which is out of their free will. While adults can intentionally stop themselves from learning, children cannot do it; they have to learn whatever they see or hear around them. This explains why Montessori approach came up with the concept of "absorbent mind". For all of these reasons, the environment and the experiences for children should be adjusted in a way that facilitate faster learning for them.
3. Sensitive Periods: This is a sensitive period for children, and it should be used in the best way possible by the teachers to improve their personality from different dimensions.
4. Prepared Environment: Educational environment is crucial for these children who quickly absorb everything from the environment. There should be an environment made ready by teachers that the children will make use of it in accordance with their interests and curiosity.
5. Auto-education: Children can learn themselves if the environment is suitable for that (Hiles, 2018).

In this approach, the older children help the younger ones in pre-school education, and the things around should be at their reach like handles, hangers, drawers, doors...etc. There should also be materials for cleaning at their reach so that they can themselves do the cleaning. Moreover, there should be extra clothes in the classes so that children can change their clothes in need (Cosgrove & Ballou, 2006).

There are also some roles assigned to the teachers in this approach. Teachers are necessary components of this environment, but their roles are quite different from the traditional roles in which teachers were the authority in class. Teachers provide necessary environment but do not interfere with what the children do; they will gain their own experiences. The children will be in the center, and they will discover and learn. Teachers will encourage them to new discoveries. Teachers will also observe them and check what they are in need so that they will provide the materials. Teachers will prepare the environment, respect for the children and introduce the materials (Özerem & Kavas, 2013).

8. Reggio Emilia Approach

This approach was originated in post-second-world-war Italy by Loris Malaguzzi. In the village of Villa Cella of the city Reggio Emilia, people attempted to construct a school for the education of their children after they experienced the devastating effects of the war. When Loris Malaguzzi got the news that these people started the initiative, he went there to help them by resigning from his job as a teacher. These people were selling the leftovers of the military vehicles to build the school. They completed it in 8 months. Malaguzzi completed his psychology education and came to Reggio Emilio to work in a center for psychological counseling serving for children. He also worked in these schools (Cagliari et al., 2016).

Malaguzzi was affected by the ideas of constructivism and founded his school in parallel with these ideas in 1963. It was a kindergarten where he adopted some principals that also contributed to pre-school education in later periods (Hall & Rudkin, 2011).

1. Child image: Children are the main actors in this kind of education. They are seen as talented, curious, investigative and strong beings, and they have the tendency to communicate with each other and cooperate.
2. Environment: The environment should be arranged in a way that they learn well and act freely.
3. Child-teacher-family triangle: There should be a communication between families and teacher for healthy development of the children. The children are the main actors while the teachers are given the role of a guide.
4. Effective participation of families in education: Families are important elements of education, and they should be resorted for their ideas.
5. Cooperation-solidarity: Children and teachers and even families should work in solidarity and cooperation.
6. Teachers: They are like the members of the peer groups of the children, their main duty is to guide them.
7. Documentation: The efforts and development of the children should be documented by the teachers.
8. The many languages of children: They called the art workshops as "atelier" and the teachers as "atelierista", and these workshops play crucial roles to form a language of symbolization.
9. Projects: The long-term projects play important roles in this education model (Fraser & Wien, 2001).

9. Discussion

It is possible to see the footprints of the change from the Middle Ages, which regard the existence of the child as unimportant, to the modern Ages, which give importance to the education of the child, in the

development processes of pre-school education. In the modern era, people's discovery of the importance of education and the post-industrial revolution societies' need for educated manpower are some of the reasons that triggered these changes. People who discovered that child education should be as necessary in primary school, took education from the hands of certain circles in post-enlightenment societies and made it spread to the whole society. Later processes continued with the discovery of how important pre-school ages are for the development of children. It is seen that more importance is given to education, especially in the periods when the devastating effect of the war is felt.

In this context, it is seen that people in the modern age give importance to pre-school education after discovering primary school education. In fact, as a result of this, we see that different schools and understandings have emerged about how pre-school education should be. These different schools have some common points. First of all, a reflection of the democratization processes of societies emerged in the design of these schools. The evolution of societies to democracy in the modern age emerged as a result of some social and political movements. It is seen that these social movements are also reflected in school systems and the education of children.

These three approaches about pre-school education emerged within the framework of this democratic education understanding. As a result, the teacher, who was an authority in traditional education, was replaced by a teacher who has become a participant and guide in the processes in modern education. The idea of evaluating children as valuable members of the society in modern ages came to a culmination that all the education models were designed to give independence to children in their learning environment so that they can discover around.

10. Conclusion

These approaches to pre-school education arouse the idea of the new age with totally new requirements. These approaches do not only indicate the inevitable path to democratization but also indicate the destruction of authoritarian education models. In order to meet the needs of modern people, education systems should be reorganized so as to be more democratic and student-centered while giving more importance to teacher roles which changed dramatically and varied in number.

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