In international schools, why do the more progressive institutions continue to provide more opportunities for the small societies in the classroom to thrive as learners, rather than in the more traditional environments?

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Abstract – This study was created to take a closer look at small societies in the classroom with traditional and progressive education approaches. It investigates the increase of international schools who Expatica (2011) and (thepienews 2013, cited ISC Research 2013) who have a choice and freedom over their curriculum they decide to deliver to their learning community. Looking closer at the term 'progressive education'. Kohn (2008) defines progressive education as attending to the whole of the child and "are concerned with helping children become not only good learners but also good people. The small society in the class consists of a number of students who each play their own part in this mini society, together making a whole. The class therefore is a part of a bigger society, together with others as the school. Each of these small societies is created of students of different backgrounds, roles and aspirations, some of which are influenced by their parents. Parsons (1959) states that an "elementary and secondary school class as a social system" and that this social system fits in with the school as a whole and on its own as understood by the student where their education takes place.

Index Terms – functionalism, progressive education, small societies, traditional education,

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1. Introduction

Over the past 100 years, the pedagogical method of progressive education has been explored in the growing number of international schools. This

term was given to describe this new curriculum unlocking potential for individuals and focusing on a more child-centered approach to learning. Numerous schools are now moving to this style which promotes enquiry, creates a caring community and encourages students to follow their passions in their learning. In these communities, each group contributing to the whole depend on each other and I will look at the role of functionalism and the impact on the small societies within an international school throughout this assignment.

Many research studies have shown that there are an increasing number of international schools who Expatica (2011) and (thepienews 2013, cited ISC Research 2013) who have a choice and freedom over their curriculum they decide to deliver to their learning community. The Progressive Education network (2007) expected a record turnout at its conference focusing specifically on progressive education. International schools that are independent are not constrained to offering a set curriculum (TIEonline 2011), therefore can choose the learning structure that they offer their students. Ehren (2013) argues that many do not have a regular national inspection and guidelines to adhere to; this offers a further opportunity to provide a bespoke academic environment for its community without the added pressure of an imminent inspection and the search for evidence to satisfy criteria**.** This has now led to an upturn in schools choosing their own curriculum; Wigford (2013) the student population can change from one year to the next so this can be a challenge in itself. Instead of choosing the static traditional approach, schools have now explored the use of International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Primary Years Programme (PYP) and Middle Years Programme (MYP) lower down the school years as a pathway to IGCSEs and to the International Diploma. This is different as it incorporates 21st century skills into a highly academic programme that includes an extended essay and a broad range of subjects from 6 areas. The above information is critical to this essay as the academic pathway that differs in an international school has now allowed some schools to discover new pedagogical approaches to deliver their curriculum. Robinson (2010) argues that in some ways preparing the students for a fast-changing future this is more than a pedagogical change it is a complete paradigm shift. This shows how the ideology we currently follow is modelled on the "interests of industrialism", with desks set in rows, ringing bells and separate facilities.

In this article I wish to argue that the more progressive institutions do offer more opportunities to its learners in their community containing small societies. I will be looking at the relationships between education and social reproduction and using 'functionalism' as a way to highlight this. This is an area of teaching and learning that I am interested in due to the vast amount of various pedagogical theories in the classroom. I have chosen international schools to focus on as I feel they have the larger scope of control of their curriculum content to deliver. They also tend to be open, inclusive communities which have the opportunity to develop their own academic structure. I will look at the contemporary social theory, students studying in small societies and functionalism.

I will start by looking at what is meant by the term progressive institutions and then will be defining small societies. I will discuss the difference between progressive and traditional institutions, then will explain what opportunities are and highlight why these can be subjective. Next I will look at functionalism in a school and how these impacts on the learners in the environment they inhabit. Finally, I will look closer at how the progressive and traditional approaches impact the learning of the students. I will also look at the arguments of Dewey, Robinson and Parsons in

connection with progressive schools and how individuals can play and develop their roles in such places.

2. What is progressive education?

I will now look closer at the term 'progressive education'. Kohn (2008) defines progressive education as attending to the whole of the child and "are concerned with helping children become not only good learners but also good people. Schooling isn't seen as being about just academics, nor is intellectual growth limited to verbal and mathematical proficiencies." The students play a pivotal role by formulating their own questions and driving forward their passions about the challenges they would like to pursue. Each student in the community is seen as unique, Socratic questions are used in the classroom and the role of the teacher can turn to a facilitator. This is very different to the front of the class teacher in the more traditional didactic setup from the turn of the last century and allows students in each individual small society in the classroom to choose their own pathway through a project by the use of collaboration with others, critical thinking and their own curiosity. Its belief is to promote enquiry in the classroom, a focus on nurturing the student to spend more time thinking about their ideas and less time looking towards future academic routes or employment. Prensky (2001) expands on this point about the use of technology as a tool to enthuse, support and challenge the students can be extremely important to this delivery. "Today's teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students. This doesn't mean changing the meaning of what is important, or of good thinking skills. But it does mean going faster, less step-by step, more in parallel, with more random access, among other things."

He looks at students leading the learning and this progressive approach and the students learn by doing, not waiting for the teacher to cover material. They also avoid being constrained structure and set standardization throughout their pathway through education. This in turn can help enrich the learners with a diversity of experiences and each student will be recognized and celebrated for their own individual values and attributes. These can extend to and relate to such attributes used in the International Baccalaureate learner profile, such as 21st Century skills, risk taking, collaboration etc. Progressive education can include all of the statements referred to previously as well as being community based, less reliant on the factory model and moving away from templates that suggest one size fits all. These VAA's (Values and attributes) from the IB profile can be used further down the school ages to facilitate transforming the learning and helping the learner develop. When building the skills, it is about encouraging students as leaders, thinkers and being resilient and not treating students as incomplete adults who have to follow a set path of tests, baseline assessments and then learning to repeat in tests instead of promoting lifelong learning. November(2012) gives advice on how to engage students by teaching with innovation and creativity to embrace this change in the digital world, he looks at using technology to transform learning and not to just bolt this technology on the side of what is being delivered in the classroom. Accordingly to November, he gives essential questions to the educators looking at, how much autonomy can we afford to give our students? How much purpose can be designed into the school work and how can we design and change the learning environments? All of these examples highlight the change that is happening and how this culture of learning is changing for our students. With students encouraged to actively engage in their own learning in their small societies, the role of the teacher changes from the more traditional schools and the emphasis is on the students to drive their own learning and not wait for the teacher to cover set topics. These topics can allow students to use

challenge-based learning or other progressive methods to develop not just subject knowledge but also feed into their values and attributes as mentioned previously. Demaine (1981) argues that "sociology of education is particularly concerned with processes of socialization involved in social reproduction, focusing on specific mechanisms in the school, the classroom and the family, and on 'outcome'. In the longer term, outcomes are said to involve the acquisition of educational qualifications and 'appropriate attitudes and values'." (Delmaine, 1981 pp. 13-46).

3. What are small societies?

Looking at an institution, there are several societies inside of this holding the whole institution together as one. A smaller team inside of the bigger picture is a microcosm of the larger society. Everyone has a clear role and plays there part contributing to the maintenance and effectiveness of the overall system. Functionalists say that when change occurs, the smaller societies inside of this make adaptations and changes to continue and flourish. Society creates a sense of togetherness and provides a safe environment in the context of a school community.

The small society in the class consists of a number of students who each play their own part in this mini society, together making a whole. The class therefore is a part of a bigger society, together with others as the school. Each of these small societies is created of students of different backgrounds, roles and aspirations, some of which are influenced by their parents. Parsons (1959) states that an "elementary and secondary school class as a social system" and that this social system fits in with the school as a whole and on its own as understood by the student where their education takes place. In many schools through elementary years and into high school/secondary school students are often taught in the same group but by different teachers. Parsons (1959) argues that this group is created by records and assessments by teachers in advanced of entering secondary school. "It is therefore not stretching the evidence too far to say broadly that the primary selective process occurs through differential school performance in elementary school and that the seal is put on it in junior high school" (Parsons, 1959, p. 131). He looked at the relationship between the plans of the students and the occupations of their parents and found that there was a correlation between the very important top quintile in ability, showing that "the high-status, high-ability boy is very likely indeed to go to college". This is also discovered by Marx (1968) and his paper on the use of class. This means that there need to be opportunities provided for all students in the class to progress evenly and fairly in education. In contemporary social theory the core attributes take precedent over others such as the relationship between the students and society and the structure of institutions, in this case schools. In a small society the main factors that the students experience are still to be shaped, the motivation of the student can be affected by their family but the rest of the individual is yet to be formed and developed. This society can experience education from a progressive school or traditional school. I will look at the different approaches and see which offer these individual students of varying ability, interest and backgrounds the best possible platform for the future. Parsons (1959) mentions "bridge between the family and wider society", both approaches can contribute this and I will look further into the various pathways they take. Durkheim (1892) looked at what held these small societies together and how they were held together. This also includes what the profiles of each individual in the group contained; looking at the data stored on each student the patterns of behaviour could be uncovered. These small societies in school place students from all over the world, sometimes

without a common first language to communicate with and they function as a group. Each student playing their role to hold the entire group together showing that functionalism can be evidenced in education through social reproduction. The small societies created in school can also be demonstrated elsewhere in society, for example at a music event, a church, playing sports or the atmosphere at the theatre. In school practice a small society can often have a conflict due to the roles that they play in the group, in traditional teaching approaches this can come from the background of the students and the data or the demographic they are from. This can also arise from 'class conflict'. As mentioned early, the traditional approaches based the educational system on providing jobs for learners in various 'classes' they were from. Factors for this could be living conditions outside of school, wealth or power in society. This was often difficult to break out from as the education system was tailored to deliver factory workers at the end of their education if this was the class that they were derived from. The students can hold the groups together by each playing their own role; the progressive schools give a platform to help the students gain ideals to be principled, caring and reflective. These skills encouraged in progressive schools can further support the small societies in the school community. The impact of promoting these through a mission statement is to keep the balance in the groups enabling the school society to function as one. The small societies can function successfully if all are moving together in the same direction, although as individuals are completely focused and set in their roles.

4. Progressive vs Traditional approaches

In this section I will look at the difference in pedagogical approaches in a progressive environment and then in a traditional school. Looking at the argument of traditional vs progressive education, Dewey (1938) argues that students need a theory of experience. The learning that he believed in, enabled progress at school gave the students, real, guided experiences. Dewey (1929) also acknowledges that this is achieved in practical modes of thinking and that "knowing cannot be separated from doing". In a progressive school, the main focus of activities is on projects, problem solving and collaboration skills. This allows all students of various backgrounds to focus on personal passions and apply these to their studies through projects. The students are a member of a community and these community skills play a pivotal role in developing the individual as a person, a leader and as a learner. Their social, enquiry and thinking skills are harnessed by personalised education and facilitated by the delivery of projects rather than units, topics and textbooks. Motivation is a key ingredient for this as progressive methods allows students to take ownership and control of their projects and create challenges that are relevant and interesting to them personally. The provision of life skills plays a major part in this approach as mentioned by Heinrich (ca 1767) "not perfection in the accomplishments of the school, but fitness for life; not the acquirement of habits of blind obedience and of prescribed diligence, but a preparation for interdependent action". Observing this approach in classroom practice, the freedom of choice and personalization of learning are the first factors that are noticed. Powerful use of technology, collaboration and flipped learning are introduced to give the students are clearer focus on what they have to do at school. Content is viewed outside of the lesson and in the lessons the teacher plays the role as a guide, using time to ask socratic questions and coach students. No time is used in the learning spaces viewing videos, listening to sound files or reading through long passages, these tasks are completed outside of school. These help develop the life skills of the learners and using these new attributes they can become more rounded

students as they progress through school, they experience leadership skills, become principled and learn about how to contribute towards citizenship in their community. This prepares students for a future that may require them to retrain and move from several careers in their lifetime. A set of qualifications may not be the best prerequisite for a career that requires a set of broader attributes allowing them to move in a more fluid way through their possible careers.

The traditional approach uses the teacher as the instructor and this can often be in the mold of front of class teaching. This approach is often referred to as "teacher-centered". They control the learning and deliver information to the students to retain and then check the learning has occurred through repetition, practice and tests to see if subject content has been remembered. The teacher can focus on discrete areas of content or the syllabus that they need to cover and this occurs in most of the time a controlled environment. The teacher "fills" the students with knowledge as escribed by Paulo Freire (1993) in his banking concept of education, "His task is to fill the students with the contents of his narration -- contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance." This is the main difference between the approaches as mentioned above, in this example the teacher teaches and the student learns, the knowledge is passed from the teacher to the student. The teacher has the opportunity to talk and the student's role is to listen. The teacher takes ownership of the learning and leads the students in the direction that they decide and enforces this decision. This can have an impact of the motivation and enthusiasm of the students as they are being led in their learning and could potentially be less motivated as it can be very abstract and not related to real-life situations. From observed classroom practice the traditional methods can often lead to students becoming detached from their subject as content is dictated from an exam board or from a syllabus that is set previously. This can often be delivered by a teacher who fails to implement differentiation to the material, acceptable challenge or in most cases opportunities to broaden or deepen the knowledge away from the objectives listed. Students can therefore miss out on their passions in subject areas and instead follow a predefined set of tasks delivered adhering to a timetable in a linear fashion. Each of these lessons are timed and delivered in slots throughout the day. This negates the opportunity to spend longer on a subject that enthuses students or giving the students freedom to pursue interests further. Willis (1977), argues "working class kids get working class jobs". This concern over the opportunities that are taken away from student due to their backgrounds is a very debatable one. Sociologists are concerned to understand why this can happen and how students who are from the middle class' seem to have aspirations to work in middle class jobs. This traditional approach can give students a narrow view of what is expected of them and more importantly what they can achieve if they apply themselves in their educational surroundings.

5. Functionalism in the classroom

Functionalism in school looks at the important role played by students in the classroom as it prepares them for adult life and roles. This reinforces the norms and the values and shows that young people can be prepared for their future roles in society. Durkheim (ca 1893) suggests that education teaches the students the required skills needed for their future occupations. I am looking closely at which type of education facilitates the needs of the learners in the coming years. In our ever-changing world, the skills needed by students have altered. Robinson (2008) mentions the skills needed for industry

and the people produced through education for the production lines which have now been replaced with attributes needed to adapt to new jobs, some that have not been created yet. The jobs that the students are being prepared for could have been decided already by the fact that we test the students and place a grade next to each one at an early age. This grade could limit the access or the scope in what students can explore in the future. A future that is fast changing and unknown to even those who are in higher education now understanding that they will change careers throughout their professional lives and that a "job for life" is replaced by the need to constantly learn new skills and the ability to do this will be a major advantage. The changes online have opened up a series of MOOCs (Massive open online courses) that now give a huge range of possibilities and opportunities to learners across the globe if they can access this online community. The access to this material then empowers the students to choose what is important to them and what they want to learn. The students can choose when they learn, by what platform and also have a rich variety of choice irrespective of their role in the society in the classroom. As mentioned previously, this can have an impact in classroom practice of students from working class or middle class have the access to any online material they wish. They can join courses in the forms of webinars, lectures and MOOCs and personalize their education in an online community. This could in turn help students see a variety of courses available by allowing them to aim for jobs outside of their 'class'. The ownership and personalization of their development could lead to students breaking away from the set roles that they have been given in their group as part of the bigger picture in the community. These courses can be the source of further communities and societies allowing students to collaborate globally with others.

Functionalism can be seen on a daily basis outside of the classroom in the school community by the systems that are in place around the building. If the students adhere to guidelines as they grow through the school this can have a positive impact on the learners I the other groups as they grow through the school. Each is dependent on each other, if the balance is not met, then parts of society will have to change in the community to regain stability and productivity. Functionalism outside the school sees the government create the education systems for the young learners which creates taxes for the government. The families of the learners are also dependent on the school as they need the support from the school to enable their children to develop into adults who can in turn support their children.

The overall point of functionalism is that if the motivated class has structure and work hard to succeed then this will offer opportunity for the learners. Each learner in the class plays their own intricate part in this class society to give it the function as a whole. This class structure is beneficial to society as a whole and everyone has the potential of achieving their individual goals. All parts of the system need to work in tandem to avoid affecting other parts and creating social problems. If problems do occur then the individuals can adapt and change to make sure that the impact does not affect the whole society. Clarity in each role is required to keep the balance in the smaller groups to then have the required realignment of the whole society if disruption occurs.

6. <u>The impact of the approaches on the small societies</u>

Robinson (2008) argues that the traditional approach to education relies on the same classroom layout as at the start of the 19th Century when learners and workers were used to rows of tables and benches in schools and factories. The

rows in classrooms are still the same as they were in the 19th Century; this shows the teacher at the front of the classroom and then static rows in front with all of the students facing the focal point of the room, the teacher and whiteboard. The students study in groups, (as mentioned previously) and this continues across the school day, each activity changing from one room with resources to another. The students do not choose which activity they do; they stick to a regimented, static timetable throughout the school year. This does not allow students to choose what they learn and how they learn this. Students are a part of their class group throughout the day and this does not cater for their individual needs. The impact of this is each student continuing to play a similar role in each of the classroom environments or lessons. We still educate students in groups using traditional education and these groups are defined by the age of the students and the test scores achieved lower down the school, this is not enabling students to move on to new challenges, passions or to take ownership of their learning. The test scores and the standardization that occurs throughout the years places a ceiling on what the students can achieve at school. This can then lead to students being labelled and having a potential grade or an aspirational target set in stone. The test scores keep the students in the same place in the society in the classroom and this can have a negative impact on their motivation as they are constantly judged by measures of the standardized testing and curriculum. Attaching this potential limits the progress of the student and places them into the brackets of their role in the small society. The impact of progressive teaching will allow students to follow their passions, working in group situations, collaborating and using powerful learning to do things in new ways that have a global impact. Prensky (2001) argues that students can use powerful ways of learning rather than trivial uses of technology in the classroom. Working together, students can use technology to completely transform their learning and have an impact globally. This can be through the use of social networking, contributing to data logging or sharing new knowledge through demonstrating to a broad range of people. This can also be found in the SAMR model which is often used in progressive education. This model measures the impact on the learning of the students by the technology that they use in the classroom. The stages start with substitution which basically replaced the current task with a task that can be completed with technology. Augmentation shows further enhancement of the task, increasing the functionality but the main aim of this model to transform pedagogy are the top two layers. They show modification of the task which allows the learner to significantly redesign their task and then the top tier focuses on the redefinition of tasks. The technology is not just used to support the learning it is used to drive the learning and transform to create new tasks that were previously inconceivable. In school practice the technology can be used to embed the sense of a community and group work through the use of social media, virtual learning environments and redefining tasks. The impact on the leaners allow students the ownership of tasks that they find passionate and this creates an intrinsic reward that enthuses the learner to enhance their experience further with the integration of technology. This freedom of learning allows students to move away from the structure and order of traditional approaches and now creates opportunities in the small societies to work together breaking down barriers of accessibility of language, ability and learner profiles.

7. Conclusion

From the research in this assignment, it makes it clear that the progressive approach will help promote small society in the classroom. This can give the students opportunities to work together to gain knowledge through practical activities,

through project work and each student can play their role in the society in the classroom. Each student is unique and therefore will contribute various elements to the project-based learning model that could be followed. Moving away from traditional methods now allow the students to sit in desk formations that are conductive to deep discussion, critical thinking and collaboration whereas in the past this might have been removed due to the students facing the front of classroom didactic method of delivering a lesson. Robinson (2008) argues "there are only two types of people - academic and non-academic; smart people and non-smart people. And the consequence of that is that many brilliant people think they're not because they've been judged against this particular view of the mind." The progressive way of teaching moves away from this formal, rigid way of teaching and lets the students "learn by doing". For each small society, students can move away from literacy levels and work being delivered straight from textbooks and move towards putting the child at the center of the learning. I believe from the evidence of this assignment the progressive method of teaching allows the small societies in school benefit from the personalised learning that this offers. This evidence has been further backed up by the observation of classroom practice and how students can work together in these small societies but have more opportunities in a progressive school through the methods and techniques mentioned previously. Even though some could argue that functionalism does not encourage students to take an active part in society, in this example it is the small societies as a whole who can work collaboratively and use inquiry to transform their learning. The main goal should be on the learning and the personality of the student, to make them a lifelong learner and not about the subject content or the knowledge from the teacher. This will in turn help build a stable part of society for the learners in the classroom as a group, contributing to the school community as a whole.

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