**Seventh Reading Analysis**

**“Growing Up Progressive?” and Progressive Education?**

In the article, “Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s” by Paul Axelrod, he mainly focuses on the subject of progressive education in Canada in the 1950s. His thesis statement is “Rather than a case of either progressive or traditional education, school policy was an amalgam in which educators were using available and emerging tools to address the perceived instructional needs of a ballooning population. They employed what they thought worked. But they did so within the political culture and dominant values of the province and the times.”[[1]](#footnote-1) He uses evidence like Board of Education minutes and records, Ontario archives documents, and detailed newspaper reports of Toronto schooling during the 1950s. He believes that In order to fully understand the nature of education in Toronto, it would be useful to have detailed information on all 108 public schools in the city, which, in 1951, included 100,000 students, 2,800 teachers, and 700 other employees. Although this makes it clear that he does not think that the argument he is giving is convincing, this article is written very well as he criticizes others’ work to prove that no one has ever fully understood the nature of education in Toronto. Criticizing Hilda Neatby’s ‘*So Little for the Mind’*, published in 1953[[2]](#footnote-2), he says that perhaps she inaccurately portrayed the reality of Canadian education as the experience he himself gained as a child was totally different. In the end, he says that Hilda Neatby’s widely publicized and (still) controversial commentary captured a piece of the educational picture, but by no means the whole picture. He thinks that Toronto educators in the 1950s were imperfect problem solvers and he also thinks that the problem is still the same.

In the article, “Growing up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario” by Robert M. Stamp tells us about his own story when he was a child. He extracts all the important things from his own memories of childhood schooling up to high school to explain us about the teaching methods, approach, and evolution of classroom environment as he grew up. As he asks a question if they are progressive at the end of each school’s education, he mainly focuses on the mental development of the children as they go to upper grades. He also questions about the ability of teachers and blames the world war two for affecting education system.

In the article, “Growing up Progressive? Part II: Going to High School in 1950s Ontario” by Robert M. Stamp tells us about his own story when he was a teenage boy entered high school. He tells us about his first experience of high school when he found that the school was too big and students were so many. Going to different classrooms to attend different classes and remembering timetables of morning and afternoon for every day were so hectic for him. He thinks that all of it was a lot of expectations from fresh students in grade 9. Moving to grade 10 was a lot of new experience for him as all the student opted different fields of studies and everything became tougher for him from homework to final exams. He tells us about the students’ feelings and thinking as an adolescent. He talks about how they struggled with homework in 11 and 12 grade and the toughness of courses. He also talks about mixed-gender classes and the classes with boys only was taking mathematics, physics, and chemistry. He also talks about how traumatic it was to participate in extracurricular activities in high school level in the 1950s.

In the articles the author is not really proving anything, he is only discussing scenario of education system during his own schooling. Although it was fun to read the author’s own experiences, the articles do not hold any historical importance as there is no reliable sources of evidence are used. The author might have included his blurred memories of childhood as evidence which cannot be relied upon. Although my whole schooling took place in India, I find the author’s memories of Ontario schooling relatable for me at many points while reading the article.

In the article, “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-1953”, the author Amy von Heyking delves into the different authors’ works to discuss The Progressive Curriculum Revision in Alberta and selling the revision. His argument is convincing as he considers explanations and analysis of various other authors’ works. He talks about various explanations and analysis of progressive education in Alberta and tells us about the limitations of all but talks positive about the explanation given in the book The Enterprise in Theory and Practice by Donalda Dickie which was published in 1941 for use in Normal Schools. This article holds a historical importance as it throws light on changing curriculums in the education system of Alberta in the given period of time. He also uses newspapers as the source of evidence which is a reliable primary source to consider for historical analysis. He also talks about the introduction of various equipment in education such as projectors, laboratories, manual training facilities etc. which started to make the classes smart. He thinks that it cannot be said that the curriculum was improved or not but it is sure that the educationalists did dominate as the real experts as they portrayed themselves superior in the education system.

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1. Paul Axelrod, *Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s* (Spring 2005), 227-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin and Company, 1953),

8, 9, 15, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)