**Movement of Education in the 20th and 21st Education**

The three concerns that guided the development of 20th-century education were the child, science, and society.

1. **Progressive Education**

The [progressive education](https://www.britannica.com/topic/progressive-education) movement was part and parcel of a broader social and political reform called the [Progressive movement](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Progressive-movement-United-States-history), which dated to the last decades of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th. [Elementary education](https://www.britannica.com/topic/elementary-education) had spread throughout the Western world, largely doing away with illiteracy and raising the level of social understanding. Yet, despite this progress, the schools had failed to keep pace with the tremendous [social changes](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-change) that had been going on.

The notions expressed by progressive education influenced [public school systems](https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-education) everywhere. Some of the movement’s lasting effects were seen in activity programs, imaginative [writing](https://www.britannica.com/topic/writing) and reading classes, projects linked to the [community](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community), flexible classroom space, dramatics and informal activities, discovery methods of learning, self-assessment systems, and programs for the development of [citizenship](https://www.britannica.com/topic/citizenship) and responsibility.

1. **Child-centered education**

Proponents of the child-centred approach to education typically argued that the school should be fitted to the needs of the child and not the child to the school. These ideas, first explored in Europe, notably in [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Jacques-Rousseau)’s Émile (1762) and in [Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johann-Heinrich-Pestalozzi)’s How Gertrude Teaches Her Children (1801), were [implemented](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/implemented) in American systems by pioneering educators such as [Francis W. Parker](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francis-Parker). Parker became superintendent of schools in Quincy, Mass., in 1875. He assailed the mechanical, assembly-line methods of traditional schools and stressed “quality teaching,” by which he meant strategies such as activity, creative self-expression, excursions, understanding the individual, and the development of personality.

A different approach to child-centred education arose as a result of the study and care of the physically and [mentally handicapped](https://www.britannica.com/topic/special-education). Teachers had to invent their own methods to meet the needs of such children, because the ordinary schools did not supply them. When these methods proved successful with handicapped children, there arose the question of whether they might not yield even better results with nonhandicapped children. During the first decade of the 20th century, the educationists [Maria Montessori](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Maria-Montessori) of Rome and [Ovide Decroly](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ovide-Decroly) of Brussels both successfully applied their educational inventions in schools for ordinary boys and girls.

1. **Scientific-realist Education**

The scientific-realist education movement began in 1900 when [Édouard Claparède](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edouard-Claparede), then a [doctor](https://www.britannica.com/topic/doctor-degree) at the Psychological Laboratory of the [University of Geneva](https://www.britannica.com/topic/University-of-Geneva), responded to an appeal from the women in charge of special schools for “backward” and “abnormal” children in Geneva. The experience allowed him to realize some of the defects of ordinary schools. Not as much thought was given, he argued, to the minds of children as was given to their feet. Their shoes were of different sizes and shapes, made to fit their feet. When would there be schools to measure? The psychological principles needed to adapt education to individual children were expounded in his *Psychologie de l’enfant et pédagogie experimentale* (1905; *Experimental Pedagogy and the Psychology of the Child*). Later Claparède took a leading part in the creation of the J.-J. Rousseau Institute in Geneva, a school of educational sciences to which came students from all over the world.

1. **Social-reconstructionist Education**

Social-reconstructionist education was based on the theory that society can be reconstructed through the complete control of education. The objective was to change society to conform to the basic ideals of the [political party](https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-party) or government in power or to create a [utopian](https://www.britannica.com/topic/utopia) society through education.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/education/Progressive-education>