

Progressive Pedagogies

Since the 1960s, educational reformers have called for a fundamental transformation in the way that students and instructors relate to one another and how material is presented. Proponents of feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy seek to:

- fundamentally alter the role of the instructor
- transform classroom teaching methods
- make students self-conscious participants in the process of knowledge construction.

What is progressive pedagogy?

- It reflects self-consciously about teaching methods and the teacher-student relationship.
- It encourages disagreement and celebrates difference—and treats the classroom as a place where differences can be articulated and analyzed
- It treats students as participants and not as spectators.
- It emphasizes praxis: active inquiry and investigation.
- It seeks to develop a critical awareness of problems, power, and inequalities

What assumptions guide progressive pedagogies?

1. That the traditional classroom is a site of power, privilege, and hierarchy.
2. That teaching is a political act, instructors are political agents, and the methods of instruction, choice of readings, nature of the assignments, and forms of assessment have political and ideological significance.
3. That traditional approaches to teaching diminish student agency, limit the number of perspectives that are raised, marginalize students who don't conform to certain norms, and unduly separate the classroom from the real world.

What are the defining characteristics of progressive pedagogies?

1. A classroom that is student-centered.
2. Teaching methods that are inquiry driven and organized around problem-solving and investigation
3. Instructors who are passionate about their subject's



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real world significance.

4. Metacognition—critical reflection about content and pedagogy—is an integral part of the classroom experience.

Is there a difference between progressive pedagogies and good teaching?

All good teachers strive to create a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment. But proponents of progressive pedagogies go further. Progressive pedagogies:

1. Emphasize the psycho-social dimensions of teaching: empathy and cultural sensitivity, but also their obverse: estrangement, cynicism, and conflict.
2. Place issues centering on class, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation at the center of inquiry.
3. Stress the value of experience—both the experience that comes from hands-on research and community-based learning and from each student's personal experiences.

How can I integrate progressive pedagogies into my classroom?

Step 1: Be self-conscious about your learning objectives and practices.

Encourage critical reflection about teaching among your students: why you chose the books, assignments, and evaluation methods that you did.

Step 2: Organize sessions around problems and questions.

Explore difficult issues in theory and practice.

Step 3: Create a participatory classroom, where students engage in active learning, inquiry, and problem solving.

Step 4: Devise assessment techniques that include elements beyond homework and testing.

What are some effective progressive pedagogical strategies?

1. Undertake a group research project.

Have students work on a formal research project which involves: designing the study, constructing measurements, selecting a sampling strategy, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting and communicating the results.

2. Use clips from feature films in the classroom.

Film clips can engage students, stimulate discussion, and dramatize important issues and experiences.

3. Integrate simulations into your teaching.

Several students might act out an issue that the class can analyze. Thus, in a social work class, students might dramatize the ethical issues raised by gift-giving or continuing contact with clients.

4. Critically analyze an article from the news media.

Examine an article's biases, omissions, and implicit assumptions.

5. Incorporate a community-based learning project.

Involve students in experiential learning that links theory, content, and professional practice.

6. Develop "case studies" and "real-world" scenarios