

Four Interest Groups

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Four Interest Groups

Kliebard (2004) describes the different interest groups that were vying to change the American education curriculum landscape started in 1890, which saw a breakdown in the theory of mental discipline (p. 6). He identifies four types of curricula that have competed to take control and to shape the American school education system. It was a turbulent period of curriculum change, where different interest groups had their visions of what school was going to teach the students. The struggle to reshape the American curriculum was met with resistance as each group made its case to dominate the American curriculum.

Kliebard describes each group with its fair share of shaping the curriculum of the American education system. Each of the four groups had a different focus area. Humanists wanted to pass on and to the best of their abilities to preserve their revered traditions (Kliebard, 2004 p.23). While, the social efficiency educators wished to focus their energy on creating a curriculum that is preparing students for future opportunities in the job market that lies before them (Kliebard, 2004, p.24). Also, the developmentalists wanted a curriculum to tailor to the child's learning capabilities; lastly the social meliorists focused on the areas of teaching to combat the inequalities and unjust among society (Kliebard, 2004, p. 24).

Humanist

Charles Eliot, a humanist, saw reasoning power as a central element of schooling (Kliebard, 2004, p. 9). The school was a medium to transfer traditional values and cultural beliefs of the Western culture. The goal was to preserve to their best of the capabilities what left in the rapidly changing and the growing of the American education system.

Developmentalists

G. Stanley Hall, a critic of Eliot, pushed the curriculum to be child-focused, where learning instructions should be organized accordingly to the capabilities of children at different successive growth stages (Kliebard, 2004, p. 11). Also, he noticed a common curriculum adapted for changing student's population was unacceptable. In addition, Hall evaluated the curriculum pushed by the Committee of Ten was not for all the high school population (Kliebard, 2004, p. 12), he noticed that not everyone was ready and capable of attending college compared to Eliot, who saw the positivity and power of human reasoning and felt all students were capable of achieving success.

Social Efficiency Educators

Joseph Rice did not agree with the curriculum that American school was running when he made his initial observation, he saw a lot of waste that could have been eliminated through a process of scientific management (Kliebard, 2004, p. 20). This elimination was going to standardize and to make the curriculum more efficient. Like Hall, he found common ground to argue against the humanistic position, but at the same time, social efficiency educator's view on the curriculum was also different from developmentalists which led to open debates as well. Social efficiency educators main goal was to design a curriculum that serves the need of the students ready for the workforce.

Social Meliorists

Lester Ward, a social meliorist, pushed to use education as a movement to correct the injustices that occurred in society (Kliebard, 2004, p. 22). He saw the school curriculum as the avenue to promote social changes and an opportunity to make a difference by eliminating the unjust from society.

Conclusion

All four groups pushed forward their agendas to dominate the American curriculum. No single group became a dominant factor, compromises, and adjustments were made along the way to factor into the new curriculum. The new focus was a result of an influx of students into secondary schools around 1890; modifications were needed to serve the interest of the new population of students (Kliebard, 2004, p. 11).

References

Kliebard, H. (2004). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958*. New York, NY: Routledge.