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Classics in Education Term Paper

Herbart Kliebard's *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* deals with the changes going on in American society during the period mentioned in the title of the book. Society is a loose term that in the paper will encompass what changes were taking place and the issue that school administrators, thinkers, and politicians faced of how our nation would educate its citizens. Throughout the book Herbert Kliebard explores the sociological processes influencing curricula, and it is important to realize that

"The curriculum involves far more than subjects taught in schools. It results from oftentimes intense struggles between groups representing differences in visions of education and the means by which to attain these visions. The curriculum directly reflects the role of the education, teaching methodologies, and the educational milieu."

It is through this lens that Kliebard understands that four prominent interest groups are battling for control of an emerging nationalized system of education at the beginning of the twentieth century. Kliebard's choice of terminology to refer to these factions trying to attain educational supremacy as interests groups is interesting because it "clearly infers the reality of political processes involved in the struggle to determine curricular emphasis". The four interest groups that will be explored are: the humanists, developmentalists, social merliorists, and social efficiency educators. Each of these groups had a distinct perception of education and the nature of education in which they all claim to be for the good of society. Much like political parties,

² O'Reilly, Laurie M. (1996) Book Review: The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958. American Education Studies, V27, 249-253

¹ O'Reilly, Laurie M. (1996) Book Review: The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958. American Education Studies, V27, 249-253

these interests groups viewed their educational ideologies as being the correct one, and each ideology had different solutions to the problems that faced the nationalization of education. The ideological positions will be explained through questions of the division of the curriculum (who should be taught) and the role of the teacher. I will look at these issues and how they either agree or conflict with my personal philosophy of education, which aligns with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences with the idea that each student is intelligent but through varying forms and that it is the job of the teacher to cultivate the students' strengths and facilitate their ability to learn.

The United States was going through a series of sociological changes at the end of the nineteenth century that would continue through the twentieth century, and these circumstances laid the foundation in which the struggle for the American curriculum would be waged during the sixty-five year period that Struggle focuses on. During the nineteenth century the United States was going through an industrial revolution which shifted the focus from cottage industries to factories in growing urban centers which truly changed American society and economy into a modern urban-industrial state.³ This period saw a decline in the traditional family, but even when it remained stable, it was doubted if the family were sufficient enough to initiate the young into an ever increasing complex and technological world.⁴ The spread of journalism and newspapers was booming, coupled with "railroads [that] were penetrating the towns and villages across the United States creating not only new industries and new markets but changing social attitudes and

³Unknown. *The Industrial Revolution: Its Affects and Consequences*. Available at: https://www.msu.edu/user/brownlow/indrev.htm

⁴ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 1

remaking Americans' sense of what kind of world they were living in".⁵ For most Americans it was creating a world in which beyond the immediate community was rapidly becoming visible.⁶ All of these changes in society fueled the fire for an emerging nationalization of the curriculum. There was an immediate impetus for change as a massive new influx of students into secondary schools began around 1890, mainly because of the introduction of compulsory attendance laws.⁷ This unprecedented increase of students, with an array of different backgrounds and abilities, created dual arenas in which action and debate occur, that is, the national and the local scenes.⁸ With society in such a rapid state of flux, it was natural for the education system to come under scrutiny, the Committee of Ten was formed to deal with the problem of what to teach America's children in school.⁹

The National Education Association appointed the Committee of Ten and Charles W. Eliot, the patrician president of Harvard University, as chairman in 1892.¹⁰ The committee was originally charged with solving the problem that high school principals were dealing with multiple different colleges that each prescribed different entrance requirements. This made it exceedingly difficult to prepare students for college, especially when their preparation was determined by their choice for college.¹¹ The Committee of Ten report proposed a measure of

⁵ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 3

⁶ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 3

⁷ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 7

⁸ O'Reilly, Laurie M. (1996) Book Review: The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958. American Education Studies, V27, 249-253

⁹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 4

¹⁰ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmerP. 8

¹¹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 8

uniformity in the high school curriculum that the school administrators had been seeking, also stating that there would be no curriculum distinction between students who were preparing for college and those who were preparing for "life". Using the doctrine of mental discipline, the committee recommended that subjects should not be taught differently to different population groups. The committee's incapability to deal with what was often perceived as a different type of student drew sharp criticism based on the fact that the committee had not sufficiently attuned itself to the changing nature of the school population. As society moved into the twentieth century, the Committee of Ten became a symbol of failure that schools did not react appropriately to social change, the changing school population, and to the domination exercised by the college over high school in the form of entrance requirements. The Committee of Ten's defense of the existing emphasis in the high school curriculum serves as a prologue to the sixty-five years of attempts to alter that emphasis by different interest groups.

Kliebard labels the defenders of the academic approach suggested by the Committee of Ten as "the humanists". The original patriarch for the humanist interest group was the chairman of the Committee of Ten, Charles W. Eliot, so it was natural that most of the beliefs outlined in the committee report were held by the humanists. As leader of the humanist movement, Eliot shaped their original educational philosophy which dealt with his ideas of the systematic

¹² Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 10

¹³ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 10

¹⁴ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer Pgs. 8 & 11

¹⁵ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 13

¹⁶ Urban, Wayne J. *Book Review: The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-195.* Georgia State University. 1986

development of reasoning power as the central function of the schools.¹⁷ The humanist philosophy on education was thought that the right selection of subjects, along with the right way of teaching them could develop all citizens of all classes to be endowed with the power of reason, sensitivity to beauty, and high moral character. 18 In the defense that all students should be taught the same regardless of social standing or path in life, humanists saw the possibility that a differentiated curriculum could have the effect of determining the social and occupational destinies of students, rather than their natural abilities and interests. 19 Eventually, Eliot stepped down and the United States Commissioner of Education, William T. Harris, assumed the position of leadership in the humanist interest group. After Harris took the post as "great defender of humanistic studies in the curriculum," he viewed the intrusion of new values by an industrial society made it even more imperative that the school not relinquish the values and function of passing on the great Western cultural heritage, while not assuming the functions of the family, church, and industry. ²⁰ The humanist ideal that shaped their education philosophy was that they viewed themselves the guardians of an ancient tradition tied to the power of reason and the finest elements of the Western cultural heritage. To them fell the task of preserving as best they could, their revered traditions and values in the face of rapid social change and a burgeoning school system by educating all students using the same curriculum as to not predetermine their role in

¹⁷ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 10

¹⁸ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 10

¹⁹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 13

²⁰ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 13

society.²¹ Education, to the humanists, was not something to be subordinated to economic, religious, or domestic interests, but to be a sphere of influence on its own.

The second interest group that represents a different conception of what knowledge should be embodied in the curriculum and to what ends the curriculum should be directed were "the developmentalists".²² G. Stanley Hall was the central figure of the developmentalist movement and he proceeded on the notion that the natural development of a child should be the central idea for scientifically determining how the curriculum should be implemented.²³ Hall was a professor of John Dewey at Johns Hopkins and had a personal goal of becoming known as the "Darwin of the mind" and bring school programs in line with scientific findings about the nature of the child.²⁴ Hall wrote an article titled "The Contents of Children's Minds," which was essentially an inventory of a child's mind and what Hall believed could be used to systematically develop a curriculum.²⁵ He thought schools too often treated students as passive receptacles by using an outdated system of education that contradicted the innate tendencies, preferment's and stopped the child's basic need for activity.²⁶ The developmentalists believed that they could develop a curriculum that would unharness the natural power within the child by basing it along the natural order of development in the child, aligning it with the child's real interests, needs,

²¹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 23

²² Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 19

²³ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 11

²⁴ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 11

²⁵ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 11

²⁶ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 38

natural impulses and learning patters.²⁷. The basic curriculum as outlined by developmentalists was that elementary school would not focus on what was deemed as harmful intellectual tasks, but would consist of play and self exploration until the minimum age of eight.²⁸ After eight years of age, the curriculum would shift and be based more on drill and memorization since the age of reason was dawning and secondary school was on the horizon. Hall had a vision of building a core high school curriculum around three main subjects: English, science and motor activities. This would be accomplished by using scientific data that not only looked at the different stages of development but to the nature of learning as well. The developmentalists and their cause of child study became validated as it was continually identified with scientific ways of addressing the educational issues of the day.²⁹ The developmentalists' philosophy of education was that is should be used as a tool for growth in the development of the child.

The developmentalists were not the only interest group using science as the basis for their curriculum reforms, "the social efficiency educators" believed that schools should be guided by a scientific system of pedagogical management that would rely on the measurement of results.³⁰ Social efficiency educators developed their beliefs in a scientific system of pedagogical management from the same principles that had flourish in industry.³¹ Through a series of articles written for The Forum, Joseph M. Rice became the leader of the social efficiency educators by default. Rice's surveys and articles exposed the school system as being lifeless, and his work was

²⁷ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 24

²⁸ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 41

²⁹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 37

³⁰ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 20

³¹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 20

to shift school life from the mindless monotony to a liberating standardization and efficiency in the curriculum.³² One of the main priorities of the social efficiency educators was that they wanted to create a society that functioned like a well oiled machine, relating how efficient a brick layer could lay brick to how students learned in school; this was most likely done because of their view on contemporary society. The social efficiency educators had an apocalyptic view of society at the turn of the century and they believed that the school was the one institution that could, with the use of a scientifically created curriculum, delay, if not prevent, society from coming apart at the seams.³³ Social efficiency educators believed that people needed to be controlled not just for their own wellbeing, but for the good of society as a whole.³⁴ It was believed that this could be achieved by incorporating the standardized techniques of industry to the business of schooling in which waste could be eliminated and the curriculum could be tailored to the functions of the roles that American students would eventually occupy in society as judged by public schools.³⁵ Social efficiency educators saw education as the essential tool for the survival of society.

The last interest groups that Kliebard believes had an impact on the battle for the American curriculum were known as "the social meliorists". Central to the meliorists' belief was that civilization was not created by a series of random events or cosmic natural forces; civilization was attained by humans' ability to change circumstances for the better based on

³² Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 20

³³ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 24

³⁴ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 24

³⁵ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 24

intelligent action.³⁶ Social meliorists recognized that society, with the advent of technology and industry, had indeed changed. It was their view that schools were the key in creating a new social vision, not the developmentalists' fixation on child psychology or trying to create an efficient society by cutting out all of the "waste". The social meliorists formed their ideas around two books, Dynamic Sociology and Psychic Factors, written by Lester F. Ward in which he hypothesized that people had manipulated Darwin's view of survival of the fittest to justify the inequalities of society.³⁸ Ward on the other hand believed that because of Darwin's theory humans could knowingly intervene and possibly right these injustices.³⁹ For Ward, social progress lay in a system where education was readily available to everyone and that the inequalities of society were a direct correlation to the lack of educational opportunities. 40 Ward's views were adopted by the social meliorists and as a result he became the leader of their interest group. 41 The social meliorists pointed to the events of time, citing the corrupt practices by political machines in the cities, the growing inequalities of race and gender, and the abuse of the sense of entitlement to privilege and power; they believed that all of these issues could be remedied by having a curriculum, as human intervention, that would raise the next generation of young Americans that would be aptly prepared to counteract those abuses and create a more

³⁶ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 21

³⁷ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 25

³⁸ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 21

³⁹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 1

⁴⁰ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 22

⁴¹ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 23

equal society.⁴² Social meliorists' philosophy of education was based on the belief in the possibility of social betterment and was founded in the idea that be everyone should be afforded equal educational opportunity

All four of these interest groups had a certain belief that education would better the American society, but they had very different ideas of what "a better society" was. The problem lies though in how each interest wanted to carry out their vision of creating this new American society that would prosper in the twentieth century. One of the major points that the interests groups disagreed on most strongly were who should be educated and in what manner. At this point in time no government agency or group needed to ever take on the endeavor of creating a system of education that would be used across our nation, creating a system of education that could be applied to not just the growing urban centers of the time but the still very much rural areas as well. One of the major questions in dealing with a national curriculum was that, did each group or area of prospective students need to be educated in the same manner. The humanists had a belief that everyone regardless of status or function in society should be educated the same way using what was deemed the "five windows" that would preserve the traditions and culture of the western world. The humanists' point of view could most be aligned with the social merliorists as the two leaders, Eliot and Ward, seemed to agree that intelligence was not something that was reserved for a particular class, gender or race (as seen today); but that if everyone was given the equal educational opportunities it would create a better society. Stanley Hall and the developmentalists based on their view of a universal system of education would disagree on this point completely. Hall believed that intelligence was determined by heredity and he believed that the best way to facilitate growth of the gifted and less gifted was to

⁴² Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 24

have separate curriculums and even have separate schools. Hall did not stop at segregating the "dullards" from the more gifted pupils; he believed that during secondary school students should be separated by sex and that each should have separate curriculums depending on what their natural station in adult life was going to be. On this particular subject of who should be taught the developmentalists and the social efficiency educators came to agreement as they believed that "future men and women were destined to perform different roles in society, and it was simply inefficient to train them in the same way".⁴³ Social efficiency educators thought it was important to determine what role each student in society would possibly fill in their adult life and to then differentiate the curriculum based on that ideal and segregate students based on whether or not their training through school would entail a higher education or just a basic course of study.⁴⁴

Apart from the four interest groups, there was another figure that tried to shape American education, John Dewey. On the issue of whether or not each group or area of prospective students should be educated in the same manner Dewey believe that

"On the one hand, we had the individual, and education aimed at the fullest possible development of that individual's powers. On the other hand, there was the social environment in which the individual lived and social environment implied that the expression of the individual's powers would somehow be coordinated with "social end". 45

This point of view can be interpreted that in a classroom, Dewey believed pupils needed to be individuals, but as a whole they were a class, a part of society. Dewey would not segregate

⁴³ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 84

⁴⁴ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 128

⁴⁵ Kliebard, Herbert M. (2004) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958 Third Edition*. New York, NY. RoutledgeFalmer P. 54

students or change the curriculum based on ability. In the Laboratory School it is easy to imagine that projects such as the famous clubhouse project would be tailored to engage all students in particular tasks. Those students that were interested in mathematics would become the architects; students that were bodily-kinesthetic learners could have possibly been in charge of the actual assembling of the clubhouse. It appears that Dewey's philosophy to create as many educative experiences for his students he would not separate them, but encourage them to work together and learn each other's strengths and weaknesses. Students would use that knowledge to foster learning for each individual student while the whole classroom would be engaged in learning. I prefer Dewey's view on education, creating educative experiences where the learner understands the consequences of their experiences. Where the curriculum is individualized as it pertains to particular interests and skills, but as a whole each individual is part of a larger learning community.

Looking at how the four interests groups fell into two basic categories over the issue of who should be educated, either a universal system of education is instituted providing everyone with the same kind of education or we segregate student based on academic ability as it will pertain to their predetermined role in society during their adult life. These four interest groups did not just have an impact on curriculum reform but on my own ideas of education as well, because I believe that each proposed system had some good aspects that I can relate to. What needs to be determined is if there is some way to really put all four views together in a coherent and compatible system of education. My educational philosophy shaped during my undergraduate training to become an educator was molded by Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences. I believe that everyone is intelligent in some capacity, it may not necessarily mean through the five windows proposed by the humanists but their abilities should be cultivated by

their interests that would eventually help them determine what they would like to do in their adult life, not have it predetermined by some bureaucratic test as perhaps the social efficiency educators would propose. To elaborate on my point that students' abilities should be cultivated by their interests, it is that students should be free to take elective classes that explore different subject matter that may be more appealing to them. If a student truly enjoys a certain subject they should be encouraged to pursue as many courses in that subject as possible in the hopes that other facets of their mind or types of intelligence will be developed as they are challenged with tougher subject matter and must apply different types of thinking to the subject. It is apparent that the modern American system of public education with an emphasis on testing is eliminating the non-academic subjects and essentially limiting the success of certain types of learners. Not until college are students encouraged to find out what subject interests them, and to use that intrinsic interest to develop their intelligence in preparation for a career in that chosen field.

The problem with a universal system of education in which the government wants to test the students and hold the teachers accountable for how their students did, is that how can government expect to have accurate results when they typically craft the test towards one specific type of intelligence? In my educational experience I have not once seen a state test administered to students that was not in the multiple choice format. What happens to the bodily kinesthetic learner or the intrapersonal learner, are they considered less intelligent because the test is not formed around their style of learning? What all too often happens is that the teacher recognizes this disparity and resorts to teaching to the test in hopes that if the student is equipped with enough test taking knowledge it will overcome any deficiency.

If we are to have a universal system of education where all pupils are treated fairly and have the same access to different educational opportunities, as a nation we must realize that we

could not possibly offer a subject area that has a specific curriculum arranged around each student. What needs to be accomplished in a school is to give the students the tools needed to explore their own interests after some level of nominal education at various institutions.

Much of the twentieth century was a tumultuous time in American education, the emerging ability of being able to have a standardized system of education across the nation with different interest groups wrestling for the power to determine the curriculum. The catalyst for the sixty year struggle was the Committee of Ten report and their accusation of colleges having too much influence on secondary curriculum and consequently looking for some form of standardization of entrance requirements. This report spawned four unique interest groups that had their own view of how to make America prosper through a national system of education in the twentieth century. Each interest group based their belief of education on their own perception of how society should function and even though they disagreed on many topics they all claimed their view to be for the good of the country. The humanists wanted to protect western ideals that they believed would be coming to an end in the wake of an industrial society, the developmentalists had a belief that education should be based on the stages of development and used to foster a child's growth in subjects they were interested in, the social efficiency educators had an apocalyptic view of society in which people needed to be controlled and that they needed to have specialized skills to become a piece of machinery known as society, and the social meliorists believed that the only way to reverse the trends of a corrupt society was to give everyone equal educational opportunities that would allow them to move up in society and be agents of change. An issue of disagreement amongst the interest groups that was looked at was the division of the curriculum and who should be educated. It was never that one interest group championed the other three, but each one has left their mark on the modern day curriculum.

What ended this fighting was largely the federal government's takeover and consequently discredidation of teachers of in the process because of Sputnik and the National Defense Education Act in 1958.

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