

A Brief History of Progressive Education

American Interdisciplinary Studies

Dohrer 2001

• 1915

John Dewey

- The School and Society

- “All studies grow out of relations in the one great common world. When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified. It will no longer be a problem to correlate studies. The teacher will not have to resort to all sorts of devices to weave a little arithmetic into the history lesson, and the like. Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated” (p.32).

• 1918

The Cardinal Principles

- report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education

- seven principle objectives of education: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character, all achieved through a unified approach: the comprehensive high school.

- a core of general education courses for all students and diversified studies or variables for specific specialty courses.

- “With increasing specialization in any society comes a corresponding necessity for unification. So in the secondary school, increased attention to specialization calls for more purposeful plans for unification” (Cardinal Principles, 1918, p.23).

• 1920s &

1930s

Progressive Education Association

- helping individuals understand and deal with social problems, especially in a democracy
- curriculum that was not only student centered and project oriented, but also inclusive of democratic values and practice.

- integration became a central purpose: correlated studies, unified studies

- subject curriculum vs. experience curriculum

- John Dewey, Francis Parker, J. L. Merriam

- broad fields, core, integrated, fused, and correlated

• 1932

George Counts

- *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*

- “His message held out the intriguing prospect that the evils so evident in the America of the Great Depression could be corrected not by revolution but by school programs that directed a new generation to changing the fundamental values undergirding the capitalist economy” (Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 1995).

- **1930 to 1942**

- The Eight-Year Study**

- “one of the most important educational experiments of the twentieth century” (Kridel, 1994, p.102).
 - five volume report, published in 1942, titled “Adventure in American Education”
 - Wilford Aikin, Ralph Tyler
 - relationship between high schools and colleges as a major factor in American education
 - 300 colleges and universities agreed to accept graduates of over thirty high schools, both public and private, from across the country under special entrance requirements
 - secondary schools could engage in whatever type of curriculum they felt was appropriate
 - 1,475 students in these schools were paired against students in other similar high schools, then followed through college for comparison
 - integrated curriculum was attempted in some form at every school
 - “The whole boy goes to school; therefore school should stimulate his whole being” (Aikin, 1942, p.17).
 - “It was thought that these changes would enable students to see the relationship of one subject to another; teachers and students would begin to glimpse the underlying unity of all knowledge” (Aikin, 1942, p.20).
 - Results: The students in the study did as well or better than their counterparts. The more experimental the high school, the better the student performed in college

- **1937**

- L. Thomas Hopkins**

- Integration: Its Meaning and Application
 - “Education does not seek to produce integrated personalities who may function satisfactorily in an integrated society, but rather integrating persons living dynamically in an integrating society”
 - 80% of secondary schools in the United States had some form of integrated curriculum.

- **1941**

- L. Thomas Hopkins**

- Interaction: The Democratic Process
 - “These administrative attempts at correlation do not long satisfy the needs of teachers. The more conscious they become of desirable relationships of their subject with other subjects in school and with life outside, the more they tend to break down subject lines and subject matter” (p.57).

- **1950s**

- Core Curriculum**

- attempts to unify subject areas around themes related to life problems identified by students: student centered, promoted active learning and democracy, utilized a thematic approach, focused on skills as well as content, and related to reality.
 - Faunce, R., & Bossing, N. (1958). Developing the Core Curriculum.
 - Taba, Hilda (1962) Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice
 - Vars, G. (1969). Common Learnings: Core and Interdisciplinary Team Approaches.

Commission on the Relation of School and College Eight-Year Study

The Participating Schools

Altoona Senior High School, Altoona, Pa.
Baldwin School, Bryn Mawr, Pa
Beaver Country Day School, Chestnut Hill, Mass.
Bronxville High School, Bronxville, N. Y.
Cheltenham Township High School, Elkins Park, Pa.
Dalton Schools, New York, N. Y.
Denver Senior and Junior High Schools, Denver, Col.
Des Moines Senior and Junior High Schools, Des Moines, Iowa
Eagle Rock High School, Los Angeles, Cal.
Fieldston School, New York, NY.
Francis W. Parker School, Chicago, Ill.
Friends' Central School, Overbrook, Pa.
George School, George School, Pa.
Germantown Friends School, Germantown, Pa.
Horace Mann School, New York, N. Y.
John Burroughs School, Clayton, Mo.
Lincoln School of Teachers College, New York, N. Y.
Milton Academy, Milton, Mass.
New Trier Township High School, Winnetka, Ill.
North Shore Country Day School, Winnetka, Ill.
Radnor High School, Wayne, Pa.
Shaker High School, Shaker Heights, Ohio
Tower Hill School, Wilmington, Del.
Tulsa Senior and Junior High Schools, Tulsa, Okla.
University of Chicago High School, Chicago, Ill.
University High School, Oakland, Cal.
University School of Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
Winsor School, Boston, Mass.
Wisconsin High School, Madison, Wisc.

from Aikin, W. (1942). *The Story of the Eight-Year Study*. New York: Harper.