

The Great Depression and Curriculum Questions

Canada experienced the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939 (Amaral & MacGee, 2002). It was a period of drastic shortages as unemployment rose to a height of 27% and half of Canadian families lived at or below the poverty line (Horn, 1984). There was a collective experience where the majority of the population had to do without. Bennett Buggies, drought, and relief camps visually communicated the toll meager incomes were having on the country. Education involved one room schoolhouses, with multiple grades and increased class sizes (Mombourquette, 2013). With no work for the youth, high school became the norm. Some children were forced to leave school to work or couldn't attend school because they lacked simple needs like shoes. The thirties was a time of suffering and hardship (Horn, 1984).

Though humiliation may not have been universal, the reality or awakening of the Depression was. As Horn (1984) describes "a generation learned that independence and security they gained from work was largely illusory....loss of work and income meant loss of status and even self-respect, losses to be guarded against at almost any costs" (p.20). During this time there began an examination of how the depression occurred. This transcended into curriculum theory that the role of the school was "to address ongoing social and economic problems by raising up a new generation critically attuned to the defects of the social system and prepared to do something about it" (Kliebard, 2004, p.157). As household debt and lack of political involvement are increasing trends, maybe we have a reason for concern and new questions for curriculum theory.

Vicki Woodside-Duggins

References

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