

Social Efficiency Movement

Educators have been using the term “social efficiency” with un-unified implications. Null (2004) claimed that there were three main uses of social efficiency during the first few decades of the 20th century, one with William C. Bagley, the second tied to John Dewey, and the third grows out of David Snedden and John Franklin Bobbitt. However, social efficiency as a movement in education is mainly tied up with the third meaning.

Franklin (1982) summarized the characteristics of social efficiency movement as: the objective and value of education was to prepare youth to practice their future adulthood role in the society; education was viewed as vocational and social adjustment as opposed to the more traditional goal of mental training; curriculum should be differentiated into separate courses of study to prepare students with different abilities for different tasks; the proposal of scientific approaches of curriculum design, combining behavioral psychological principles with industrial management techniques (p. 10).

Franklin Bobbitt contributed significantly to social efficiency movement. He demanded educators use a “scientific technique” (1918, p. 48) of production development by industry and published works on how to manage education effectively. Curriculum historian Herbert M. Kliebard (2004, p. 98) identified with Bobbitt asserting that Bobbitt’s 1918 book *The Curriculum* gave the most concise and explicit definition of the social efficiency theory followed by social efficiency educators.

One major criticism towards social efficiency movement is that the intent has been to socialize youth into the adult work and citizenship roles which American society offers in order to reproduce the existing social class hierarchy in succeeding

generations of Americans (Franklin, 1982, p. 10).

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Reference

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