

The Project Method (later known as the Experience Curriculum) 1918

Drawing from vocational education, “The Project Method” written by William Heard Kilpatrick was dubbed the most influential work in 20th century that lead to the integration of projects in curriculums (Kliebard, 2004). The article popularized the famous method which is still used today (e.g. problem-based learning), with students engaging in projects they are interested in and the teacher facilitating the learning process (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Kilpatrick (1918) referred to *project* as “any purposeful experience,” and “education [should] be considered as life itself and not a mere preparation for later living” (p. 323). It was in direct opposition to the mechanical factory quality of the social efficiency and scientific curriculum, as it placed the child at the centre of learning and provided the child “whole-hearted purposeful activities” that had immediate value. Although the social context was already ripe for this type of curriculum (Germans and Brits already implemented trade schools, and Americans calling for a schools to reflect societal needs), it was Kilpatrick’s interpretation of the social context and inspiring words that lead to the wide acceptance and highly successful implementation of the proposed method (Kliebard, 2004).

The Project Method was reminiscent of Dewey’s position in harmonizing the student with society, however, Kilpatrick arguably succeeded where Dewey fell short. Rather than using vague terms, Kilpatrick used convincing illustrative terms such as “worthy-living”, “purposeful acts”, “laws of learning”, and calling out the “cold storage” view of knowledge in which current curriculums were endorsing, all of which appealed to the American population. Although there were criticisms such as Charter (1922) suggesting this curriculum did not teach children what they need to know to be future citizens, or that it was based on unscientific theory and training (Washburne, 1928), the vast number of experiments from primary schools to high schools

reporting the success of the curriculum and increase in teaching quality diminished these critiques (Kliebard, 2004).

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