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Driven by the societal and industrial changes of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American educational system was ready for a shift. It was not only a shift in mentality around the teacher's role in education, but also a shift in realization of the need in a common curriculum (Kliebard, 2004). Several attempts were made to develop a set of educational standards with intention of not only being introduced, but also commonly accepted. The 20<sup>th</sup> century marks a term of multiple interpretations and disputes, at times confrontational and heated, around establishing the common curriculum.

Described by their distinct approaches towards standardization of curriculum and visions of education, Kliebard (2004) outlines four main movements of educational reforms and reformers. They are mental disciplinarians/humanists, developmentalists, social efficiency educators and social meliorists.

The first movement known as mental discipline takes its roots from Plato's interpretation of the important role of geometry in developing general intelligence (Kliebard, 2004, p.9). In the nineteenth century, it was further developed based on the works of the German psychologist Christian Wolf. Mental disciplinarians believed that mental muscles, similar to the physical muscles, could be developed through training and practice in certain disciplines or "faculties", as described by Kliebard (p.4). The selected list of disciplines included mathematics, traditional

humanities and classics languages like Greek and Latin, but diminished the role of modern languages, natural sciences, and other applied subjects.

In the report “The discipline and the furniture of the mind”, published in 1829, mental disciplinarians Yale President Jeremiah Day and Professor James K. Kingsley, distinguished the main two functions of education as the developing of thinking ability and building the knowledgebase (Kliebard, 2004). The development of both functions was attributed to the strengthening the mind as a muscle. However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the theory of mental discipline shook and collapsed mostly due to the undergoing social and industrial changes and the need for the newer type of schooling.

The president of Harvard University and the appointed Chairman of the National’s Education Association’s Committee of Ten, Charles W. Eliot, recognized the need for the developing the direction in curriculum and projecting systemic approach “to reasoning power of schools” (Kliebard, 2004, p.9). Although considered a mental disciplinarian, Eliot broke away from that theory by recognizing the value in every subject, as opposed to elite few. While heading the Committee of Ten, Eliot’s humanistic approach led to the creating of the common core High School curriculum, in which he strongly supported the institution of elective subjects as well as no coursework separation for the college-bound and not college-bound students (Kliebard, 2004).

The second movement in the history of the curriculum development is attributed to G. Stanley Hall. It is known under the name of the child-study or developmentalists theory. Hall became the first awardee of the Doctorate degree in psychology in America (Thorne and Henley, 2001). As a trained psychologist, Hall recognized the importance of every person’s potential and advocated for unleashing students’ natural powers of learning via providing appropriate

curriculum. He recognized and criticized the three limitations of the Committee of Ten and Elliot's theory, such as: all students had to study the same curriculum; all subjects were equivalent in value; both college-bound and not college-bound students had to receive the same education (Kliebard, 2004).

At the time, Hall's views were perceived as controversial, but from the current perspective they could be considered revolutionary. He was able to recognize and plant a seed for differentiation in education as well as distinguish between career-based and liberal arts educations, both of which are important components of modern education.

However, in 1895, some of these views weren't as welcomed by the United States Commissioner of Education, humanist and leading Hegelian William Torrey Harris. Harris was a big opponent of specialized vocational training and outlined the five main subjects that he considered the "windows of the soul", such as grammar, literature and art, mathematics, geography and history (Kliebard, 2004, p.15).

Opposing to Harris's traditional humanistic views, came a young faculty from the University of Michigan, John Dewey. He was a member of National Herbart Society, led by Charles DeGarmo, who expressed open criticism to Harris and his points of view. The open disagreement between Herbartians and Harris marks the important point in the "battle for the control over American curriculum" (Kliebard, 2004, p.17).

The third movement known as social efficiency educators driven by Joseph Mayer Rice. Rice spent years traveling around country and collecting data on schools. He was later considered the founder of comparative methodology in education. Social efficiency educators

envisioned technology driven, specialized and differentiated curriculum, as opposed to humanistic positions of Elliot and Harris (Kliebard, 2004).

Lastly, the social meliorists recognized “a new social vision” of the curriculum, led by Lester Frank Ward. He saw curriculum’s educational power in its an ability to promote a social change.

Kliebard, H. (2004). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Thorne, B. M. & Henley, T. B. (2001). *Connections in the History and Systems of Psychology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.