

Educational reform in the antebellum period

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The antebellum period (1781-1860) was characterised by significant changes in all social spheres. Besides the transformation in political, social and economic systems, educational reforms were also realized. However, it is worth noting that reforms did not immediately lead to efficient and sustainable structures until other improvements were made during subsequent years. Changes in educational systems that took place during this period have had major impacts on twenty-first-century learners. One notable event during the antebellum era that brought about educational reforms was the rise of a 'Common School Movement'.

During the initial years of the antebellum period, education had been privatized to the extent that poor children did not have accessibility to education. Due to this, the 'common school movement' came into force to fight for the establishment of a common schooling system. The aim of the movement was to push for a system that would offer educational prospect for all children (Simpson, 2004). According to them, education could eradicate poverty and maintain social stability (Simpson, 2004). It is through the movement's effort that the government established publicly supported secondary and elementary schooling systems. These moves have had a great impact on me as a twenty-first-century learner in that I can access education. As it stands now, all children in America regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or social class can access education. The initial common belief that public schools were for poor children is long gone.

This movement also fought for the expansion of schools. They compelled the government to allocate public funds towards public schooling systems so as to meet expansion needs. They also advocated the need of public schools to

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be accountable to state governments and school boards. As a result, the government was forced to finance public schools (Simpson, 2004). The government also came up with laws that made elementary school attendance compulsory. In subsequent years, education became universal. The impact it has had on me as a twenty-first-century learner is the fact that through the government, I have the ability to access various learning resources.

Consequent results of the movement's fight also included government's establishment of a practical educational curriculum system. Quality of education had become a major concern for most people. Most philosophers at the time insisted on a system that would not only enable people to read and write, but also one that would help eradicate poverty through innovation and creativity (Simpson, 2004). Similarly, people developed the perception that, the more educated they were, the more productive they became. Over the years, these ideas have contributed to the general development and improvement of educational curriculums. As a learner in the 21st century, the impact these ideas have had on me is that I can access quality education that has expanded my thinking and reasoning capacity to a great extent. Moreover, I have developed a value system that has helped me to establish good morals firmly and exercise my duties and responsibilities as a citizen. Through various reforms that were achieved through the 'common school movement', education has been able to eradicate or rather control various social challenges. For instance, it is through education that society can deal with class, gender, religious and racial differences. To a very large extent, political, social and economic sustainability has been achieved. As a learner, education has enabled me to develop skills and acquire knowledge that I

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could somewhat not have achieved if I lived before the antebellum period.

Reference

Simpson, B. D. (2004). The Common School Movement and Compulsory Education. Alabama: Mises Institute. Retrieved on 15 March 2015 from <http://mises.org/library/common-school-movement-and-compulsory-education>.