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Sociopolitical, Socioeconomic, and Historical Contexts of Curriculum Policy

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Article History:

Received: 15 June 2024; Accepted: 9 July 2024;
Published: 14 July 2024

Abstract

In seeking to understand the history of the development of curriculum policy in the U.S., it is constructive to examine America's educational system since World War II. This research examines the history of curriculum policy in the U.S. and how it evolved through the lens of curriculum theory. Specifically, this research seeks to address the research question of why were there shifts or changes in the scope of U.S. curriculum policy during certain critical periods in our nation's history? The research employs the qualitative methodological approach of historiography by examining crucial past white paper national policy reports on policy regarding K-12 education curricula and historical accounts by scholars in the field of curriculum policy. The research findings of this qualitative study show that sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts have had a significant impact on the development of curriculum policy in the nation. A review of the U.S. educational system, during and post-World War II reveals that American educators sought school curricula more conducive to incorporating students into society. Further, an examination of this system also reveals that social and historical contexts resulted in a shift in perspectives during the period of the 1940s and 1950s towards more traditional academic education.

Keywords

curriculum policy, sociopolitical contexts, socioeconomic contexts, historical contexts, educational system, World War II, school curricula, American society, traditional academic education.

Volume 13, 2024

Publisher: The Brooklyn Research and Publishing Institute, 442 Lorimer St, Brooklyn, NY 11206, United States.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30845/aijss.v13p4>

Reviewers: Opted for Confidentiality

Citation: Deas, K. (2024). Sociopolitical, Socioeconomic, and Historical Contexts of Curriculum Policy. *American International Journal of Social Science*, 13, 28-36. <https://doi.org/10.30845/aijss.v13p4>

1. Introduction

In examining the U.S. educational system since World War II, it is evident that sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts have had a significant impact on the development of curriculum policy in the nation. As the U.S. entered World War II, the nation began to focus more upon training and preparedness. This change in America's focus was most definitely a social or historical context that influenced curriculum policy. Because of this shift in the nation's focus, society-centered curricula were moved to the forefront ahead of individual-centered curricula. In fact, during and after, World War II, with the national mood becoming more conservative, U.S. educators began to advocate for school curricula that was more conducive to successfully incorporating students into American society. However, the impact of the Cold War along with the increasing viewpoint that science and technology were important for solving problems of national concern were social and historical contexts that caused the mood in the 1940s and 1950s to turn more towards traditional academic education. During this period, the American public demanded that U.S. schools teach subject-centered curricula which they believed would lead to academic excellence (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

2. Literature Review

There are several scholars who focus upon K-12 education curricula whose research makes a significant contribution to the field. In a positive vein, Marsh and Willis (2007) highlight through their research a shift in America's in education towards preparedness and training as our nation became involved in World War II. Their research reveals that rather than focusing upon a providing education curriculum that was geared more towards individuals, K-12 education in the U.S. became more centered around the needs of society. In short, Marsh and Willis (2007) show that the primary goal for American education during and after World War II was to provide an education in our nation's classrooms that would better incorporate U.S. students into society. However, with the onset of the Cold War, Americans began to become more concerned with U.S. success in science and technology and as a result, Marsh and Willis's (2007) research reveals that there was a shift in the attitudes of policymakers who began to prioritize more traditional areas of education such as math and science to remain competitive internationally and to address issues that were of national concern. In addition, their work shows that during this period in American history, the public called for a more traditional, subject-centered curricula to achieve academic excellence in our nation's classrooms (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

Daniel Tanner's (1986) research highlights how the former Soviet Union's success with Sputnik during the Cold War served as an impetus for the U.S. government to make improving our nation's K-12 education curriculum a national priority. Tanner (1986) brought to the forefront America's concerns over the former Soviet Union's success in developing space satellites as America interpreted this as a national security threat. He highlights the fact that U.S. policymakers concerned with the former Soviet Union's newfound advantage in the space race encouraged our nation's schools to adopt robust curricula packages developed by the federal government to educate U.S. students (Tanner, 1986).

The value of Larry Cuban's (1992) work in the field is that he showcases how the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s had a profound impact upon both school practices and the content of school curriculum. For example, he highlights in his research how the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision by the U.S. Supreme Court served as a catalyst for positive change in American schools' curricula. Further, Cuban's (1992) work notes the efforts undertaken by U.S. secondary schools during this period in our nation's history to develop and introduce new academic courses that highlighted the experiences of Blacks, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups in America. Moreover, his research reveals the value of curriculum guides to the American education system that introduced new content and revisions for critical subjects such as English and History (Cuban, 1992).

While there was a period in America's history where the Cold War and Soviet advancement and success in the space race prompted our nation to strengthen math and science offerings in its K-12 education curriculum, there were socioeconomic conditions and challenges the U.S. faced that led its policymakers and educational leaders to embrace a K-12 school curriculum that emphasized basic academic skills. James Anderson's (2003) research highlights the rise of socioeconomic factors such as youth dissatisfaction and unemployment that greatly challenged American society and served as a symbol that U.S. schools were failing our nation's youth and not meeting their basic educational needs. Further, he notes that the socioeconomic challenges facing America's youth became more acute during the middle of the late 1970s. Most importantly, the value of Anderson's (2003) work is that he shows how these socioeconomic conditions faced by our nation's youth were an impetus to move education in U.S. secondary

schools away from stressing traditional academic subjects such as math and science in response to Soviet advancements in space technology during the Cold War to a curriculum that emphasized basic academic skills. Further, Anderson's (2003) research makes a significant contribution to the field because his assessment of policymaking in the U.S. shows that this change in focus towards basic academic skills was in direct response to rising youth unemployment in the nation.

The work of Thomas Snyder and Charlene Hoffman (2003) in the field stems from the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* which revealed our nation's decline in industrial productivity tied to what some argued was a subpar curriculum in U.S. schools. Snyder and Hoffman (2003) show that this prompted many states to initiate action by requiring an increase in the number of years of required study of certain subjects in high school for graduation. They contribute much to the body of research in the field of curriculum policy as their research provides a substantive analysis which reveals that high school students during this period were graduating with more academic courses (Snyder & Hoffman, 2003).

Boser Ulrich, Matthew Chingas, and Chelsea Strauss (2015) as well as Richard Elmore and Gary Sykes (1992) convey through their research contributions to the field of education curriculum that investment in developing a high-quality curriculum for teachers to utilize in K-12 education can have a positive impact on student achievement in U.S. schools. Most significantly, their research reveals that it is worth investing in a high-quality curriculum for our nation's schools because curriculum reform is a low-cost initiative with a high return on education investment (Boser, Ulrich, & Strauss, 2015; Strauss & Sykes, 1992).

While a number of scholars in the field of education curriculum have engaged in research that sheds light on the various changes in the scope of curriculum policy in the U.S., few have brought to the forefront the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts that came into fruition during certain periods in American history that had an impact on what policymakers and education leaders determined should be the focus of U.S. curriculum policy in K-12 education. Depending upon the extent of these contexts, curriculum policy for the nation's schools fluctuated between an emphasis on traditional subject areas such as math and science and a focus upon aiding students to acquire basic academic skills that they can apply in general areas of employment. This current research presented in this analysis of the history of curriculum policy in the U.S. is a valuable contribution to the existing body of research because it fills a void in the field where there is a need to present research that offers a viable account for the shift or changes in the scope of curriculum policy for America's schools over the course of the nation's history.

3. U.S. Curriculum Policy Through the Lens of Curriculum Theory

In tracing the history of curriculum theory in the U.S. through the lens of curriculum theory, it is constructive to note that the theory itself can be viewed as an academic discipline with a focus on assessing and shaping educational curricula. There are several interpretations of curriculum theory, and it can be approached from educational, psychological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives. When one examines curriculum theory, it is primarily concerned with values, the historical analysis of curriculum, how current educational curriculum is viewed along with associated policy decisions and theorizing about future approaches to curriculum policy (MacDonald, 1971; Kliebard, 1989; Wallin, 2011; Pinar, 2004).

In general, the contemporary field of curriculum theory can be defined as an approach to understanding curriculum as a symbolic representation (Pinar, 2004). The theory itself can be applied to explain U.S. curriculum policy during certain critical periods in our nation's history such as the Sputnik era during the Cold War between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union and more recently, the multicultural education movement in America. Most importantly, as it applies to the objectives of this current research, curriculum theory as characterized by this study, can be applied to explain the shifts or changes in the scope of U. S. curriculum policy during various crucial periods in American history (MacDonald, 1971; Kliebard, 1989; Wallin, 2011; Pinar, 2004).

4. Methodology

This historical analysis employs a qualitative research approach to examine the history of curriculum policy in the U.S. and how it evolved through the lens of curriculum theory. Specifically, it seeks to address the research question of why there were shifts or changes in the scope of America's curriculum policy during critical periods in our nation's history? This research utilizes the qualitative methodological approach of historiography through the close examination of critical national white paper policy reports such as the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (NCEE) 1983 report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* which highlights U.S. decline

in industrial productivity. Further, this research draws from the historical accounts of scholars in the field of education curriculum. Through a robust and close examination of these white paper policy reports and scholars' historical accounts, this research offers a compelling explanation for our nation's shift in the scope or direction of U.S. curriculum policy.

5. Research Findings

The research questions this historical analysis seeks to address is why were there shifts or changes in the scope of U.S. curriculum policy during critical periods in American history. The research findings of this study show that sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts have had a significant impact on the development of U.S. curriculum policy for K-12 education. Further, this qualitative study shows that these factors can account for shifts and changes in curriculum policy for America's schools during critical periods historically in our nation.

6. Discussion

It is clear from the results of this analysis that factors such as Soviet advancement in space technology ahead of the U.S. and periods in the nation's history of high youth unemployment were sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts that impacted the scope of curriculum policy in the U.S. Moreover, an implication that can be drawn from these research findings is that there is a need for the U.S. to move in the direction of a national standard of curriculum policy that would prepare students adequately regardless of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic challenges in society or historical contexts. This would be a policy offering a robust national curriculum for all fifty states to adopt that would withstand these challenges and prepare all students to acquire skills to enter any arena professionally. This research leads one to draw these implications in ways where existing research in the field is more limited.

7. Historical Events Influencing Curriculum Policy in the U.S.

A review of the U.S. educational system since World War II also reveals that the former Soviet Union's successful launch in October 1957 of *Sputnik*, the first man-made satellite to orbit earth, is another historical context or event that influenced curriculum policy in the U.S. The U.S. perceived this development as a threat to our country's national security. A result of this concern was that the U.S. began to move in the direction of supporting the notion of a single curriculum for American schools. While the idea of a universal adoption of a single curriculum for U.S. schools may have been desirable, given the implications of America's tradition of local control of schools and its values of independence, proponents of such a policy questioned its feasibility (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

Many U.S. observers concerned with education reasoned that if the success of *Sputnik* was evidence of the former Soviet Union's advantage in military technology, then the Soviet educational curricula in areas such as science and mathematics must be superior when compared to the curricula in U.S. schools. As a result, U.S. schools were urged to strengthen teaching in science and mathematics to produce a new generation of American scientists and mathematicians. In addition, American schools were also urged to improve teaching in other vital subject areas. The significance of this development was that it was consistent with efforts to move toward subject-centered curricula that had been building since World War II (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

The U.S. response to the former Soviet Union's success with *Sputnik* was to focus directly upon improving the American school curriculum. While the federal government could not essentially prescribe school curricula, it was in the position to provide vital finances to institute critical changes. The strategy embraced by the federal government was to develop a series of attractive curricula packages that would entice U.S. schools to adopt them for educating students. In fact, some of America's leading academicians which included Nobel Prize winners from some of the nation's leading higher education institutions, were directly involved in creating these curricula packages for U.S. schools. The position embraced by federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) involved in supporting the development of school curricula packages was that these field experts as opposed to teachers responsible for teaching the curriculum were in the best position to make critical decisions concerning curriculum content. During the 1950s through the 1960s, the National Science Foundation was the leading federal agency in an unprecedented billion-dollar program effort to give priority to the sciences and mathematics in the U.S. curriculum (Marsh & Willis 2007; Tanner, 1986).

8. Discipline-Centered Curriculum Packages Emphasizing Science and Mathematics

In placing an emphasis on science and mathematics in the school curriculum, the objective was to increase the number of scientists and engineers in the U.S. to meet underlying challenges posed by the space race and the Cold War. To accomplish this goal, discipline-centered curriculum packages emphasizing “new math”, “new physics”, and “new chemistry”, were developed for America’s elementary and secondary schools by teams of university scholar-specialists (Tanner, 1986). Further, because of these efforts, there were predictions that these changes would essentially double the proportion of students enrolled in high school physics within five years, and lead to increases in college majors in physics. However, there was a decline in the proportion of students enrolled in high school physics along with a decline in college students majoring in physics. In fact, at the collegiate level, this decline in the number of college students majoring in physics occurred despite an increase in the total college population in the U.S. during the 1960s. Moreover, the new math and science curriculum reforms instituted for American schools ultimately failed to deliver what was promised. For one, the introduction of these new curriculum reforms resulted in a decline in students’ ability to make mathematical applications (Tanner, 1986).

9. The Movement to Humanize American Schools During the 1960s and 1970s

After efforts to institute discipline-centered curriculum reforms in response to challenges posed by the space race and the Cold War, there was a movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s to essentially humanize the schools in the U.S. By the late 1960s, the American public’s increasing concerns about the merits of pursuing the Vietnam War along with growing disillusionment over the Johnson Administration’s promises to use education as a means to eradicate poverty, achieve social justice, and create the Great Society were sociopolitical contexts that clearly influenced curriculum policy. Many Americans held the viewpoint that education in general but particularly subject-centered curricula were not adequately geared towards addressing many of the social problems that divided America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result of these sociopolitical contexts occurring during this period, American educators and the public briefly supported the idea of free schools and were proponents of an open-classroom movement that would embrace or incorporate individual and society-centered curricula (Marsh & Willis, 2007; Tanner, 1986).

While the open-classroom movement was making inroads with U.S. elementary schools, a national program that supported career education in America was introduced by U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland. In launching this program to support career education, Marland was highly critical of schools as well as society in general for placing too much emphasis on attending college at the expense of extolling some of the values of career education. Further, during this period, there were also changes that occurred in schools’ curricula that were related to the historical *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) court decision. This development was a historical context that influenced both the intended and taught curricula in U.S. schools. As a direct result of the Civil Rights movement, attention became focused upon both school practices and curriculum content. For instance, particularly in U.S. secondary schools, new courses focusing upon blacks, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups appeared in the curriculum. In addition, curriculum guides that included new content and revisions in subject areas such as history and English were also published (Tanner, 1986; Cuban, 1992).

10. The Back-to-Basics Movement in U.S. Schools

The period of efforts to humanize U.S. schools which occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s was followed by an era of educational entrenchment or back-to-basics movement. Some scholars point to the tendency of university researchers concerned with the effects of formal education to evaluate secondary schooling negatively compared to their more positive evaluations of higher education. This tendency to evaluate secondary schooling negatively on the part of university researchers provided some impetus for the retrenchment of back-to-basics during the 1970s.

Further, an assessment of this period shows that several reports were issued concerning adolescents and secondary schools that essentially portrayed adolescence as a pathological stage of human development. Several reports such as those released by the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education and the National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education viewed challenges such as youth dissatisfaction, unemployment, and disruption as evidence of the failure of U.S. schools. These problems are clearly examples of some of the socioeconomic contexts or conditions that influenced curriculum policy during the middle of the late 1970s. These socioeconomic contexts and conditions that were prevalent during this period served as an impetus for high schools to return to their narrow academic mission by emphasizing basic academic skills. This movement supported training and education in non-

school settings for the masses as well as a higher-order academic program in high school for college-bound students. Many of the influential reports released during this period advocated for eliminating comprehensive high schools in favor of establishing academic high schools. Moreover, these reports called for the creation or development of alternative schools for youth incapable of fitting into academic settings, and emphasis on mastering basic skills. The reports also supported reducing the age of compulsory school attendance and the length of the school day. Finally, these reports advocated for public funds to be allocated to business and industry to support training adolescent youth for work and other alternatives to schooling (Tanner, 1986; Anderson, 2003).

During this period, a dual educational system in the U.S. came into fruition through the creation of segregated, specialized area or county vocational schools. In contrast, the comprehensive school model was being adopted by other advanced democratic nations while these schools were being established in the U.S. Moreover, during this period, U.S. states were instituting minimum competency testing while reducing the school curriculum to emphasize the lowest level of basic skills. In fact, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) highlighted declines in students' abilities to reason and apply scholastic knowledge. The significance of this is that these declines were directly attributed to the back-to-basics movement and emphasis on state minimum competency testing. As a result, error-oriented teaching began to dominate the American education landscape and a new emphasis on teaching to think was treated as a special skill to be incorporated into the school curriculum (Tanner, 1986).

11. American Education During the Post-Sputnik Period: The Impact of "A Nation at Risk"

During the post-Sputnik period, some U.S. citizens believed that military components were essentially the greatest threat to U.S. national security. However, by the 1980s, a majority of Americans began to believe that economics specifically international economic competition was the biggest threat to U.S. national security. In response to this perceived threat, the National Science Board of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1983 proposed a multi-billion-dollar investment to revamp America's school curriculum in science, mathematics, and technology in response to the Japanese assault on our world industrial and technological markets. Further, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) in 1983 issued a report called *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* which highlighted America's decline in industrial productivity and placed responsibility for this crisis squarely on the shoulders of U.S. schools. Specifically, the NCEE charged that U.S. schools essentially failed to measure up to those other nations on international comparisons of student achievement (Tanner, 1986; Marsh & Willis, 2007).

As a result of the NCEE's report, many observers concerned with the state of public education in the U.S. advocated for an expansion of federal financing for schools. In fact, this call for increased federal funding for public education occurred at a time when the policy position of the executive branch of the federal government was essentially to support reducing federal financing for public education in the nation. From a political standpoint, the NCEE's report *A Nation at Risk* created such a strong public reaction that the Reagan Administration determined that it was more politically advantageous to embrace the report rather than abolish the U.S. Department of Education which had commissioned this influential report (Tanner, 1986; Marsh & Willis, 2007).

An assessment of the education landscape during this period reveals that many of the initiatives pursued by states had a profound impact upon education reform. The impact of this effort by states to increase the years of required study of certain academic courses for high school graduation is reflected in data from the National Center for Education Statistics' *Digest of Education Statistics 2002*. When one examines the average number of Carnegie units earned by public high school graduates in various subject fields by student characteristics, the National Center for Education Statistics' data indicates that during this period of the 1980s, students were graduating with more academic courses and less vocational ones (Tanner, 1986; Snyder & Hoffman, 2003).

The NCEE's *A Nation at Risk* report has essentially set the tone for national debates about education since 1983. During the period of the 1990s and 2000s, public sentiment was consistently in support of the NCEE's recommendations. During the 1990s, there were efforts to establish national curriculum priorities along with discussions concerning the establishment of a unified curriculum for the entire nation. Throughout the 1990s, the federal government proposed a set of national goals that became known as *America 2000* which was published in 1991. The *America 2000* initiative originated from an education summit conference of state governors convened by President George H.W. Bush in September 1989 (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

12. America 2000 Initiative: National Goals for Education Reform

There were six national goals to be attained by the year 2000 that were at the core of the *America 2000* initiative. First, the initiative proposed that all children in the U.S. should start school prepared or ready to learn. Second, *America 2000* proposed that high school graduation rates should increase to at least 90%. The third national goal was that U.S. students should complete grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. Fourth, *America 2000* advocated for American students to be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement. The fifth national goal was for all adult Americans to become literate and acquire knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy. Finally, the sixth national goal was for all U.S. schools to be free of drugs and violence and offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (Marsh & Willis, 2007). In addition to these goals, President Bush in April 1991 proposed that new world-class standards in the five core subject areas of history, mathematics, science, geography, and English along with a voluntary national testing program in these subjects would commence in September 1993. Further, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in May 1991 endorsed the setting of basic, proficient, and advanced national levels of achievement in basic academic subjects (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

In the late 1990s, there were increasing calls for more national testing partly due to support from the Clinton Administration. The emphasis placed on national testing increased to its highest level in 2001 when George W. Bush became President. President Bush very early in his administration proposed federal legislation aimed at increasing federal funding for public schools particularly in areas that were economically depressed. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed by Congress with bi-partisan support in late 2001. The NCLB law requires U.S. schools to test American students in certain grade levels for proficiency in mathematics and reading. If schools don't meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) by showing sufficient improvement in students' test scores within two years, they are categorized as failing schools and can be reorganized or closed by respective state education officials (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

Further, students from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend these schools are provided with options to transfer or receive private tutoring. In 2004, the Bush Administration required that under the provisions of the NCLB law, yearly standardized testing be extended to include virtually all grade levels and to add science as a subject area to be tested. In relation to the area of school curriculum, there was a move towards establishing a unified curriculum for states through the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS) with states incorporating those provisions by 2013 (Marsh & Willis, 2007).

13. Conclusion: America's Education Landscape Post-WWII

When one examines the education landscape in the U.S. since World War II, it is quite evident that sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and historical contexts or conditions have had a profound impact on the development of curriculum policy. The U.S. public, government officials, educational professionals, and interest groups advocating for education reforms have been prompted to support or enact education policies in reaction to social, economic, and political conditions both at domestic and international levels. Most significantly, as it relates to education reform efforts today, the NCEE's 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report appears to be the watershed development that has most influenced the current debate over the direction education reform should take in the U.S.

In more recent policy debates in the nation concerning how to reform education in America, the policy of school choice and vouchers has been advocated as a solution to allow poorer students often students of color being educated in what have been termed as "failing schools" to have access to better schools offering greater resources and a more quality school curriculum. Those supporters of school choice and vouchers present this vision of opportunity to students of color, low-income families, and other marginalized student populations as a means for advancing civil rights. However, as school choice and voucher policies became more popular in our nation and grounded in the political orthodoxy of the Republican Party, this policy approach to reform education in America and provide opportunity to marginalized student populations to have access to schools with more resources and a quality curriculum has evolved into subsidies for more socio-economically advantaged families with few anti-discrimination protections. Further, this policy approach of school choice and vouchers laid the groundwork for approaches such as education savings account programs and school vouchers funded by donations that are tax-credited (Welner, Orfield, & Huerta, 2023).

Finally, in tracing the history of the development of curriculum policy in the U.S., it is evident that curriculum plays a critical role in how American students are taught. Moreover, there is a strong body of evidence that indicates that

when PK-12 teachers receive and utilize a high-quality curriculum, this can have a significant and positive impact on student achievement in the U.S. Further, a review of the development of curriculum policy reveals that today, as it concerns our U.S. system of K-12 education, research shows that curriculum reform is typically inexpensive, and some of the highest quality elementary school math curricula cost on average only about \$36 per student for most school districts (Boser, Ulrich, & Straus, 2015). In short, curriculum reform appears to be a low-cost, high-return educational investment. Specifically in mathematics, research shows that higher-quality curriculum in elementary school mathematics can come at a relatively low cost for school districts. Further, research reveals that a more rigorous elementary school math curriculum can result in a far greater return on investment (ROI) than other reforms (Boser, Ulrich, & Straus, 2015).

However, in earlier grades, research indicates that cost is not always commensurate with quality. Moreover, there appears to be very little correlation between cost and the quality of instructional products in PK-12 education. In addition, when policymakers make decisions concerning curriculum policy, an assessment of the history of the development of curriculum policy reveals that they do not consider rigorous measures of curricula quality. For instance, state adoption decisions have often been based upon limited assessments of quality and rather weak proxies for alignment to state standards. Furthermore, what is clear currently is that politics often dominates over issues such as the adoption of textbooks or whether advanced placement (AP) courses in African American Studies should be offered in a high school curriculum. Given the history of American and its past and current struggles over the issue of race, it is critical to offer such courses as a component of school curricula so that students regardless of racial background can engage in constructive discussions to achieve greater racial understanding and equity across our society.

The significance of this historical analysis's findings is that they lead one to draw the implication that it may be beneficial to students and our overall society for the U.S. to move in the direction of adopting a national standard of curriculum policy to be implemented by all fifty states that would be robust enough to withstand sociopolitical and socioeconomic challenges or historical contexts along with preparing students to enter any arena. *Common Core* is an example of this policy approach. This study lays the groundwork for future research concerning *Common Core* and its impact on states that moved in the direction of implanting the policy.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Ethical Approval: Not applicable.

Funding: None.

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