LEARNER INVISIBILITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF EDUCATION REFORM

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OUTLINE

• Intro

• Education Reforms
  • I. Sputnik (National Defense Education Act)
  • II. A Nation At Risk
  • III. No Child Left Behind

• IV. Flaws and Learner Invisibility
• V. Reality Check
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SPUTNIK I: 10/4/57
NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT

- **Goal:** More engineers and mathematicians → NASA & DARPA

- Highly focused on consisting rigorous science and mathematics courses: “the most important ingredients in the nation’s strategy to compete in a global economy”

- Russia: “Sciences = Priority”
  - School days: 213 vs 180
  - 6 days a week vs 5
  - ≥ 4 hrs of h.w. vs 30 min

- “Someday US = #1 in space”

- 1969 – Neil Armstrong

(Hoffman)
A NATION AT RISK

- Commission: **18** Members

- Emphasized the need for academic standards

- Preparation of skills needed to contribute to, build, and maintain the nation's defense requirements and the nation's economic competitiveness

(Hunt)
A NATION AT RISK

• **Assess** the "quality of teaching and learning" to compare "American schools and colleges with those of other advanced nations"

• Commission made **38 recommendations**:
  → **Content, Standards and Expectations, Time, Teaching, Leadership and Fiscal Reports**

• "Educational salvation found through harder study or harder subjects"

• Politicians addressed the wrong problem
  • "The target was the education system in general, rather than what was happening inside individual classrooms" (Hunt)
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

• Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

• **Goal:** “Ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education”

• **Standardized Testing**
  • Student test scores → Teacher success

(Fisanick)
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

• Began with resounding promise that every U.S. schoolchild would attain “proficiency” in reading and math

• With NCLB is it doesn’t actually mandate that kids learn anything

• Relies too heavy on student test scores
  • Ultimately sets up schools for failure
  • High stake testing = major threat from fairness, from accuracy, from quality, and from equity

• Neill McCluskey, a policy analyst with the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom, claims it is becoming increasingly clear that the focus on stakes testing is an educational failure

(Fisanick)
FLAWS AND LEARNER INVISIBILITY

• “Banking System” (Freire)
  • High quality teaching and learning

• Assessment tools are inadequate
  • Use multiple forms of evidence for school success
  • Create growth model to track progress (Obama)
  • Ex. Sullivan High School in Chicago

• Very high measures → Penalized schools
  • Excessive test taking and school sanctions
  • Only sets schools up for failure

• America always has to be #1
  • Focus on an *actual* education and beneficial learning for students
“Only people who have no contact with children could write legislation demanding that every child reach a high level of performance in three subjects” (Fisanick)

- Empower educators, parents, and communities
- Focus on school improvement: provide all resources needed to succeed (Obama)

- Too much emphasis on economic competitiveness is distracting,
  - Takes too much away from students and importance of their education interests/needs.
  - This position looks beyond students, as if they weren’t even there (Perrone)
REALITY CHECK

Frederick Hess & Michael Petrilli:
“The nation’s foremost education objective should be closing racial and economic achievement gaps.”
(Fisanick)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6AfN5EiULg
THANK YOU

• References:
  • The Sputnik Moment by Hoffman [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhJnt3xW2Fc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhJnt3xW2Fc)
  • Barack Obama: No Child Left Behind [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsVimwm6xQ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsVimwm6xQ4)