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Reflection Paper 2

Throughout this course we have discussed various perspectives on the teaching field. With the new Common Core Standards in full swing and teachers being evaluated based on APPR requirements, many professionals have become critics or supporters of the new procedures. Unfortunately I have yet to teach using the Common Core Standards so my perspective is very limited and ignorant based on my lack of experience.

If I were a parent or member of society that is not directly involved in the education field, I would probably be a strong supporter of the new standards. When watching The Hunt Institute YouTube video, the Common Core Standards are described as the solution to the “persistent and dramatic achievement gap” that exists between our students and those in other countries (The Hunt Institute). There’s a belief that “students need better knowledge and tools to allow them to compete in this global economy” and the “rigor” of these standards will provide our students with that (The Hunt Institute). Similarly Ken Slentz’s passion and belief in these standards are extremely convincing that all the answers to our educational problems are now solved. He explains that the targets of the Core are aligned with what our students “need to know in order to be successful in college or whatever their choice is to do in our global economy” (Slentz, 2012). His speech and description of the standards is very compelling and convincing, however he is not representing the perspective of classroom teachers who are forced to implement these specific guidelines.

On the contrary, Marion Brady outlines eight problems of the Common Core Standards in his Washington Post article. One of the biggest issues is that “the Common Core kills innovation” (Brady, 2012). Many teachers complain that its specific guidelines do not allow teachers to be creative or modify their lessons to meet the needs of their students. However this method is being used because “scholars” have assumed what core lessons all students must know in order to be successful in the global economy. There is no consideration of cultural, economic, or geographical differences, talents or struggles, or learning styles and preferences. It is a uniform system that has been adopted by most states in this country and is believed to be the answer to our achievement gap. Similarly, Diane Ravitch explains in her blog that she reserved her judgment for the Common Core Standards, and described herself as “agnostic”; however “after much deliberation” she decided that in her opinion “the Common Core Standards effort is fundamentally flawed by the process with which they have been foisted upon the nation” (Ravitch, 2013). She continues to explain the issue with the fact that this program was “imposed on the children of this nation despite the fact that no one has any idea how they will affect the students, teachers, or schools” (Ravitch, 2013). She draws a parallel to the Federal Drug Administration who wouldn’t approve of a drug without running trials and determining harmful side effects, yet our government implemented a nation-wide educational program without testing its side effects on our students.

Because I have yet to get my hands dirty with the Common Core Standards, I have yet to develop a strong opinion on it. Two years ago, while student teaching, the district I was working in was preparing to use the Common Core during the next school year. When looking it over briefly with my cooperating teacher, I thought it didn’t seem as scary as everyone was making it out to be. However, after hearing feedback from others in this course and reading articles on the topic, I am baffled as to how this system was put into place, so quickly, and with such force. No one knows for sure what the outcome of these standards will be; however like many educational programs that have come before it, I believe it will be a fad. In a few years new research will come out that explains that we need to be teaching a new set of standards, and the system will be changed once again. As for now, us teachers are legally obligated to follow the Common Core Standards and therefore need to make the best out of them. We have to rely on our creativity and innovative qualities to use these standards and help our students learn.

References

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