

How the Success of the “New History” Can Help Us Understand the Failure of the “New Social Studies”

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It may seem strange to suggest that an attempt at curricular reform in the 1960s in one country succeeded because of seventeenth century attitudes toward religion and schooling while in another it failed because of seventeenth century attitudes, but that is what happened when reformers in Britain and in America attempted to introduce inquiry based history instruction into the schools of the United States and the United Kingdom. While the New Social Studies in the United States and the New History in Great Britain each grew out of a desire for inquiry based instruction, the relationship between local schools and the national government as well as attitudes toward schooling and the relationship between secondary and post secondary education in the two countries played key roles in determining success or failure. The New Social Studies largely failed to meet its goals, while the issues that were raised in the late sixties and early seventies by proponents of the New History continue to inform instructional practice in the U.K. today. The relationship of historical study to the social sciences, the position of history in the overall curriculum, and the question of whether secondary education perceives itself as connected either to the schooling which goes before it or whether it is intimately related to university education appear to have been the ultimate determining factors in the failure of the American movement and the persistence of the New History in Britain.

In the U.K., local schools trace their heritage to the parishes of the established Church of England. In the nineteenth century, when compulsory secular schooling came into fashion, it was natural that the educational system that was devised would follow precedent and be national in nature. This has meant that Britain has been able to develop centralized national curricula in all content areas. Additionally, secondary education in Britain tends to serve the ends of higher education—A Levels, O Levels, and the Sixth Form all require a level of academic specialization in Britain that is unheard of in America or on the continent. A British secondary student studying history in the sixth form is laying deep academic foundations toward advanced university study, and by age 16 has often assumed a content specific specialization unheard of in America (Peterson, 1987). This has meant that British universities exercise considerable control over what takes place at the preparatory level, meaning that reform movements like the New History easily gain traction because secondary educators accept that their function is in part to please the universities by preparing students who arrive at the university ready to assume a particular major field of study.

The fact that American schooling was begun by congregational Puritans meant that from the outset, American educators have seen local control as a high civic virtue, and have resisted attempts at nationalization of the curriculum. Although the rise of such programs as “seniors to sophomores” and early college academies in the last decade have begun to re-orient secondary education toward that which follows, for much of the twentieth century secondary education was in many ways an extension of the elementary and middle school years. This has meant that reforms that originate from the universities tend to appear to K-12 teachers as something foreign, or as elitist materials sent down to the schools from aloof college professors.

Americans have often interpreted federal efforts to reform education as a threat to local control and as an attempt by elites to wrest local control from parents and taxpayers. This was the case with many of the New Social Studies reforms, when between 1962 and the early 1970's, the U.S. Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Ford Foundation funded over fifty projects that sought to transform how social studies were taught. Most of these projects resulted in the creation of innovative, inquiry based curricula and curriculum materials for K-12 social studies classrooms. The key notion for New Social Studies projects was that they would expose children to the structures of each of the social science disciplines, allowing school children to experience something of the nature of what it felt like to think like a social scientist. (Byford & Russell, 2007)

As with most national movements in the U.S. during the fifties and sixties, the development of the New Social Studies has to be examined in light of the Cold War. When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, Americans were traumatized and were willing to experiment with school curricula in order to "catch up" to a Soviet nation that they believed had pulled ahead of the U.S. in terms of scientific advance. American military and political leaders began to examine areas in K-12 education that were said to account for the supposed deficiency. The National Science Foundation, created in 1950 in order to improve science education and research, and the 1958 passage of the National Defense Education Act provided funding to reform curriculum and instruction in science, mathematics, and in foreign languages. The federally funded movement led to the development of curriculum materials that were labeled "the new math" or "the new science" (Hertzberg, 1981; Fenton, 1967). When the National Academy of Sciences sponsored the Woods Hole Conference in September of 1959 in order to bring together the leading educationists and thinkers in science and mathematics education, and Jerome Bruner published the proceedings of the conference as *The Process of Education* (1960), the "new" movement had an apologist and a set of scriptures setting out the themes for the entire movement. Bruner wrote that children should be exposed to the structures of the disciplines, that intuition should be a learned skill to be cultivated, and that as Bruner wrote, the notion that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development," (Bruner, 1960: 33) which reflected Piaget's influence on Bruner and on the movement as a whole.

One of the criticisms of historians who examine the New Social Studies is in the fact that at its origin it was a movement designed to serve other ends than those of education, namely those of national security and defense. Ronald Evans (2004) calls this the "permeability of the curriculum," and writes that a curriculum driven by international geopolitical ideology was doomed to fail. Looking at the tremendous amount of federal money earmarked for education in the wake of Sputnik we should probably note that the most significant consequence of Sputnik was neither the space race nor national defense; rather, it was the impetus that it gave to federal funding of public education, a trend that was new at the time but which we all assume to be the norm today.

The social studies lagged behind other "more important" content areas like mathematics and science in reforming themselves. As there is no academic discipline called "social studies" at the university level, academicians had not been calling for a reform of social studies in the decade of the fifties. In fact, the social studies were the slowest K-12 content area to respond to the federal call for reform. The first suggestion that the social studies be reformed did not appear in an academic journal or in a paper read at a conference: it appeared in the popular weekly magazine *The Saturday Review* in 1961. The College Board's Charles R. Keller of the Advanced Placement program challenged social studies educators to undertake the type of curriculum reform characteristic of the "new math" and the "new science," suggesting that the entire social studies construct as it then appeared be jettisoned. Recognizing the "artificial nature" of the social studies, he wrote that the main problem with the social studies was in its uncomfortable and unnatural artificial design. He suggested that history be made the main school subject for study and that the study of history be supplemented by the social science, and that schools should begin to think of the content area as "history and the social sciences" (quoted in Evans, 2004: 124-125). The elevation of history to the center of the curriculum would have made the American system resemble the British system. Of course, as there was no centralized national educational office that could mandate such a change, Keller's ideas remained at best a series of suggestions.

The problems with attempts at reform were already evident, however. James Becker (1965) pointed out that there absolutely was need for deep and serious reform in the social studies, but that at no previous point in American history was there less agreement on what form those reforms should take. When the first social studies projects were launched in 1963, Donald Robinson cautioned that “everyone has a different notion of what the social studies should attempt”, and he presciently pointed out that despite whatever reforms were attempted, the social studies curriculum would ultimately continue to be driven by “a combination of national tradition, suggestive state programs, locally prescribed curricula” and other considerations like religious preference and the ethnic composition of localities (quoted in Evans, 2004: 128).

At the time that funding for New Social Studies projects began to appear, some university professors were already moving toward the development of inquiry based materials for schools, including economist Lawrence Senesh of Purdue University who was working on an economics program and a textbook series aimed at elementary aged students. Edward Fenton was an historian at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh whose teaching load included the social studies methods course. Fenton began to teach history courses in the Pittsburgh public high schools as well. Fenton began to introduce primary source documents as a way to introduce high school students, undergraduates, and pre-service teachers to the actual work of the historian, and he became convinced that American high school students could derive great benefit from learning history through the use of primary sources, historiographic study, and interpretation of diverse secondary sources.. As a result of his experiences, Fenton produced a social studies methods text and a series of inquiry based K-12 history texts that elevated him to a leadership role in the curriculum reform movement. Similar to Fenton’s work was that of the Amherst History Project, which used primary sources and secondary historical accounts in the form of case studies in order to provide secondary students with opportunities to develop and test their own hypotheses about historical causation (Fenton, 1967; Byford and Russell, 2007). The underlying belief behind inquiry based instruction was that students would be exposed to the structures that lay beneath each of the social sciences. The content taught in the classroom should be derived from the structure, concepts, and methodology of each academic discipline. Teachers would teach students how historians and social scientists create new knowledge in their disciplines, thereby allowing students to “do” the work of a sociologist or anthropologist, an economist, a political scientist, or an historian.

In the October, 1962 issue of *Social Education* there appeared a small notice announcing U.S. Office of Education funding for “Project Social Studies.” Funds were to be made available for research, curriculum study centers, academic conferences, and seminars. By July of 1963, the USOE reported that 7 curriculum centers, 11 research projects, and 2 developmental activities had been approved for funding. Four more were funded in 1964, and by 1965 there were over two dozen projects and curriculum centers funded by the NSF, the USOE, or by private foundations (Evans, 2004: 127).

These included funding for the work of Fenton, Senesh, and the Amherst consortium. New projects tended to follow a similar design; the Anthropology Curriculum Study Project, the High School Geography Project, and The Sociological Resources for Secondary Schools all were headed by university faculty and were sponsored by professional academic associations within each respective field. Few of the new projects sought to develop an integrated model for the study of the social studies; most were designed by academicians in their own fields without any thought of the integrated nature of these content areas at the level of the schools. Each project sought to develop curriculum materials that would explore principles specific to the field, using the inquiry approaches distinctive to each discipline. University faculty from the Arts and Sciences were vital to the success of the new social studies; ironically, their involvement also was in part responsible for its ultimate failure, as, for example, Anthropology is seldom if ever taught as a discreet subject in the schools.

The Harvard Social Studies Project, headed by Donald Oliver and his protégé, James P. Shaver, was unique among the funded projects in that it alone attempted to integrate skills and concepts from virtually all of the social studies disciplines. Designed to teach students to analyze controversial issues through discussion and written argument, the project produced a series of individual units that covered a wide array of historical and contemporary social studies issues ranging from economic interpretations of the

American Revolution to the tension between communalism and individual identity in communist China (Byford & Russell, 2007). The Harvard Social Studies Project probably produced the best history and civics materials to emerge from the New Social Studies era. The “Public Issues Series” of pamphlets took students through American History and Government by means of student engagement with primary sources, which would “draw students into the drama of history.” The pamphlets were between 30 and 50 pages long, and often posed what we today would call “essential questions” about each topic, supplemented by short readings from different historical schools of thought surrounding the issue at hand. The goal was not rote memorization of facts and dates, as Oliver and Shaver sought to guide students to a realization that there are multiple causations, multiple perspectives, and multiple interpretations of historical events. Of all of the many “products” that came from the New Social Studies, the Harvard pamphlets are the most enduring, with several being updated and reprinted by the Social Science Education Consortium in the 1990s (Bohan and Feinberg, 2010: 124).

The most controversial of the projects was an anthropological and sociological based project named Man: A Course of Study, or “MACOS”. Funded by the NSF, MACOS was developed by Harvard and M.I.T. faculty working with the Educational Development Center, Inc., in Cambridge, MA. Aimed at grades four through nine, MACOS used non-traditional teaching exercises. Students wrote “field notes” as they watched documentary films without narration about animal studies and then about the Netsilik of northern Hudson’s Bay and other underdeveloped groups in South America and in Africa. They also wrote journals and poems as they explored recurring themes about human collective behavior in an effort to promote an appreciation for the common humanity all persons share.

By 1975, MACOS was under attack from parents, school administrators, and politicians who claimed that the curriculum exposed children to animal cruelty as well as to Netsilik cannibalism, adultery, female infanticide, and the killing of the old and infirm. The MACOS debate highlighted a general criticism of schools that appeared by the seventies, in that the social and behavioral scientists who designed the curriculum were looked upon as agents of social change determined to influence children against the beliefs or wishes of their parents (Symcox, 2002).

The MACOS controversy illustrates the role that local control, and perceived threats to local control can have in determining curriculum and educational policy. The first attack on MACOS took place in Lake City, Florida, in 1970, during the very same year that the city’s schools were being desegregated. A new Baptist minister in the community, who also had children in the city’s schools took to the radio airwaves to decry the polygamy, bestiality, incest, and animal cruelty that he found described in the teachers’ materials that accompanied the MACOS program. Within a year, the program was dropped from the Lake City schools. Similar protests took place in Maryland, New York, and Washington State (Kraus, 2010: 318). A local documentary television show in Reston, Virginia showed short film segments from the curriculum in which seals are gored and skinned, a giraffe is stabbed, and children eat the eyes of a caribou. While apologists claimed that these film clips were taken out of context, the harsh reality of “primitive” human life was deemed by many parents and taxpayers as inappropriate material for the elementary school (Kraus, 321).

Phoenix, Arizona became the largest city to have a MACOS controversy. State Senator (and later U.S. Representative) John Conlan took up the attack on MACOS, calling it a dangerous assault on “cherished values and attitudes concerning morals, social behavior, religion, and our unique American political and economic lifestyle.” Conlan called the program a “brainwash” and called for Congress to end funding the program (quoted in Evans, 2004: 142). Congress held hearings into NSF funding in 1975 at which parents and many conservative groups offered testimony about the dangers of the NSF dictating educational policy. Kraus suggests that the reaction against MACOS during the 1975 congressional hearings moved the NSF away from funding behavioral or social science projects for fear of losing funding for “hard” scientific research and educational projects (Kraus, 2010: 326-329). When the NCSS responded to the threat against MACOS by holding a conference on the issue in 1976 in Racine, Wisconsin, Representative Conlan sent an aide named George Archibald to read a paper in which he described the rise of an “academic-bureaucracy complex” made up of the NSF, the nation’s universities (particularly schools of education), and the NEA, “all in league with the federal government with its vast

powers and resources” all of which posed the “principal threat to their values, families, spiritual, social, economic, and political heritage itself.” Archibald’s main concern was that curricular change in the social studies was being effected without regard to “the wishes of local citizens and taxpayers,” and instead urged a return to the study of traditional history, and a continuation of the rights of local schools in local communities “to perpetuate in their schools each community’s social, religious, political, and economic way of life” (quoted in Evans, 2004: 143).

With resistance against external educational mandates being a major cause of difficulty for New Social Studies projects it should not be surprising, then, that some of the most successful of the projects were those that sought to meet or to address local needs and concerns. In St. Louis, Harold Berlak created the Metropolitan St. Louis Social Studies Center. Rather than operating out of his office at Washington University, Berlak worked for seven years with teachers in the St. Louis schools to create dynamic, student centered and inquiry driven social studies materials that the teachers themselves were invested in, and which sought on many levels to address local problems in the metropolitan St. Louis area, like those presented in the case study “Our Changing Neighborhoods,” which connected social studies skills like listening and inferential thinking to problems in the city itself (Klages, 2010).

Shirley Engle’s “American Political Behavior” was another successful project, but its success lay in its assumption of a traditional American role for the social studies. The social studies have always had a civic function; in fact, prior to the development of the New Social Studies the course entitled “Problems of Democracy” was the standard high school preparation for citizenship. Engle’s “American Political Behavior” was an attempt to create new, inquiry based materials for citizenship education. It was when New Social Studies theorists attempted to find new ways for the social studies to meet its traditional goals that the programs had their greatest success (Hahn, 2010).

While many of the New Social Studies projects produced quality instructional materials, the movement ultimately failed to meet its own targets. While few describe local control as a defining factor, many scholars have attempted to explain the reasons for the failure of the movement. In a retrospective on his own work, Edwin Fenton (1991) saw a lack of issues orientation to be a cause for failure, and he observed that New Social Studies curriculum designers tended to ignore the needs of the students and of society in order to examine the underlying structures of the disciplines. Hertzberg (1981) added the fact that curriculum designers had insufficient awareness of the history of social studies education and the issues that already divided the social studies community. Haas (1977) described how most teachers were never made aware of the new curriculum materials and methods, and that each of the social sciences represented in the New Social Studies focused on its own structures and disciplines.

There is certainly a great deal of merit to Haas’ last point. Largely designed by university faculty in colleges of arts and sciences with minimal input from curriculum designers in schools of education, few of the projects were designed to meet the reality of the K-12 classroom. Many of the projects would have required teachers to make radical changes to their styles of teaching in order to make the materials work. In addition, teachers with minimal training in economics, anthropology, and sociology were expected to be able to teach children how to do the work of an economist, anthropologist, or sociologist. Although the federal government provided funds for summer teacher training institutes aligned with several of the projects, most teachers were ill prepared for teaching with curriculum materials designed by college faculty with little sense of pre collegiate needs (Haas 1977). James Shaver of the Harvard Project surprised many in 1976 when in his NCSS presidential address he declared that the curricular reforms of the sixties were “a fad that exemplified our longstanding and unthinking subservience to professors in academic disciplines,” and stated that the problem with most of the reforms was that they were “scholacentric” (quoted in Bohan and Feinberg, 2010: 128).

The most articulate critics of the New Social Studies in the sixties tended to be historians like Richard Farrell, James Van Ness, and Mark Krug. Beginning with the supposition that history has unique methods of inquiry, these writers questioned whether there was a single mode of inquiry for any of the social sciences, let alone one for all of them. Krug wondered what ultimate purpose was served in developing “Little League Historians” and “Little League Sociologists” (1967: 111). Little in the preparation of teachers qualified them to instruct students in historical or in social science research methods. Farrell and

Van Ness (1967) examined the inquiry skills demanded of teachers by the New Social Studies and concluded that the suggestion that teachers train students to be junior historians has a rather comic aspect; the students are to become what the teachers are not. Teachers of American History in secondary schools are students of history- many are very perceptive students of history- but they are not trained historians.... The idea that it is easy to be a historian needs to be kept out of the secondary school curriculum (689).

Much of what the historians did during the era of the New Social Studies was defensive. Ever since the rise of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1916, traditional historians have primarily seen the relationship of history to the social studies curriculum as largely a question of jurisdiction or "turf." By the 1960s many historians feared that their discipline was being forced out of the curriculum in favor of the social sciences, and that some new materials were written not as a reform but as a rearguard action to protect the threatened position of history in the schools (Evans, 2004: 129).

The issues raised by the New Social Studies were illustrative of problems with the entire concept of the social studies as an academic discipline in the schools. Krug believed that the structural curriculum proposed by Bruner would create structure without content. In order to prevent this Krug proposed that history become the basis or the common body of all study in what then constituted the social studies. Traditional historical narrative could then be supplemented with insights specific to any of the social sciences. Used selectively, social science modes of inquiry could assist history teachers in creating history curricula that would make all history into contemporary history, filling the study of the past with meaning for the present. Krug echoed Keller when he proposed a re-organization of the social studies curriculum into what would be called "History and the Social Sciences," in which history would be enriched by the appropriate application of social science methods when appropriate (Krug, 1967, 1970).

The New Social Studies also failed because of the traditional civic role of the social studies in preparing students for informed citizenship. The New Social Studies, with its emphasis on the structures of the social sciences, appeared removed from the task of preparing young people to understand issues of voting, taxation, and the Constitution. With a few exceptions, the college professors who designed New Social Studies projects did not see citizenship as the function of the social studies. Their interest was in extending exposure of the structures of their academic disciplines into the earlier grades.

The distance between general American society and the world that the academicians sought to bring to the classroom was highlighted by the social upheaval of the late sixties and seventies. The model of the high school student as a young historian or sociologist seemed far removed from the drama that was playing itself out on America's streets in the late sixties, and was quickly replaced with the model of the student as a young activist, which, although still a departure from the earlier civic model of the social studies, still connected students to the realities of American life in a vivid and immediate manner. In addition, local resistance to federally funded school projects (like MACOS) that seemed to contradict accepted public morality has to be examined in light of public resistance to federally ordered desegregation and other perceived attacks on parental rights at the hands of the growing federal educational bureaucracy. As funding ended after the election of Richard Nixon in 1968, the production of new material slowed and eventually ended. The issue oriented social studies that emerged in the seventies did little to assuage the fears of the historians, and led to a reaction in the eighties toward traditional history characterized by the work of Diane Ravitch and Bradley Commission Report on History in the Schools (Ravitch, 1983).

Krug's criticisms of the New Social Studies have never been proposed as a reason for the failure of the movement. Nor was his suggestion that there be a shift in emphasis from the social studies to history ever acted upon nationally. Perhaps this is because those who study the New Social Studies tend to accept the social studies as a beneficial and worthy academic discipline. The latest academic study of the New Social Studies (stern: 2010) contains twenty two essays by educationists on various aspects of the New Social Studies. Most of the authors evince an almost Jacobite romantic yearning for the New Social Studies, and await a day when the movement will be revived.

In the meantime, the issues that Krug and Keller raised about the primacy of history in the academic curriculum remain unresolved. Throughout the nineties, as states wrestled with standards based social

studies, the old fights began again. Some states like Massachusetts have eliminated licensure in social studies for teachers and replaced it with a history license to which teachers may add endorsements for each individual social science, but this itself is evidence of the very issue of local control which doomed the New Social Studies. Each state acts alone.

An examination of the experience of British curriculum reformers who championed the “New History” provides evidence that Krug might have been correct, and that the failure of the New Social Studies was due, in large part, to the artificial nature of social studies as a subject area. Like the New Social Studies, the New History grew out of the perceived need for inquiry based instruction. Also influenced by Bruner, proponents of the New History wished to see students exposed to the methods of the historian (Booth, 1994). In 1964, the British Government established the Schools Council for Curriculum and Development, which examined the existing curriculum and sponsored curriculum projects much like those in the U.S. The early projects funded by the Schools Council were generally those involved with the “New Science” or the “New Mathematics”. By 1980, over 165 projects were funded (Samec, 1979). Just as the social studies were relatively late in developing new inquiry based curricula in America, British reform did not occur in history until other content areas were well under way in developing inquiry based materials and methods (Sylvester, 1994). Beginning in 1971, the history curriculum was revised for 8- 13 year olds. A year later, David Sylvester at the University of Leeds created the Schools Council History Project for 13- 16 year olds (Sylvester, 1973). Jones (1973) pointed out that, like the New Social Studies, the New History was primarily concerned with process, skills, and enquiry rather than with content.

Like the New Social Studies, proponents of the New History were responding to the apparent need for the inclusion or the integration of social science research and inquiry methods into their classrooms. Some history teachers and academicians wondered whether history was losing out to the social sciences, and feared that inertia on the part of British historians and history teachers would eventually lead to the adoption of a social studies curriculum in Britain (Sylvester, 1994). While some “traditional” historians argued against the adoption of inquiry based history instruction, those who supported the New History believed that in doing so they were preserving history as a school discipline. Curriculum developers were urged to construct syllabi based on identifiable skills and so develop the methodology of the historian (Jones, 1973: 14). The Schools History Project offered a constructivist model of history instruction, based on organizing concepts and teaching historical skills, thereby allowing students to learn history as historians did (Husbands, 1996). Dennis Shemilt, the architect of the new history, argued that students cannot “know” history until they grasp something of the nature of historical inquiry, and that by the time students were adolescents they should grasp such concepts as evidence, empathetic reconstruction, causation, change, and continuity (Kent and Kent, 2000). Peter Rogers (1978) wrote that “having something on good authority” was an inadequate rationale for history instruction; in a phrase worthy of a medieval casuist he went on to write that

Only ‘know how’ can give ‘the right to be sure’ because it is the only valid basis for claims to ‘know that’. On the other hand, ‘know how’ is no general technique of enquiry, but is marked by a large element specific to the sort of area of enquiry and hence type of proposition which it has been shaped to serve. There are different kinds of evidence, which have to be deployed and manipulated by different enquiry strategies (Rogers, 1978: 7).

The debate in England would be largely curricular, between those who favored the New History versus those who championed the traditional chronological narrative of history. Unlike the New Social Studies, the New History was qualitatively different because of the position of history within the existing curriculum. Social Studies did not exist as a discrete content area in Britain, so the issue was in essence how history would be taught and what relationships the social sciences would have to the history curriculum.

The New History closely approximated Krug’s “History and the Social Sciences”. Jones (1973) saw the New History as a reaction to those who wished to integrate the social sciences into a study in Humanism that might approximate the American model. Perhaps like the Americans, British historians were driven into the New History as a reactionary attempt to preserve their place in the curriculum. There were attempts to create Integrated Humanities or Social Studies curricula, including one very similar to

the MACOS curriculum entitled “Man in Society”, designed at Gosford Hill School, Kidlington (Chaffer, 1973). But by and large, the debate in England tended to center on how to create a history curriculum that accommodated the need for students to be exposed to some of the forms of inquiry used by social scientists.

Derek Heater (1970) noted that the emergence of the social sciences created hostility among “traditional” historians, but he pointed out that history was more than an academic subject. It is a mode of thinking, and as everything that is on earth today has its own history, all academic subjects could be taught historically. He differentiated between social science, which is comprised of structured subjects using various research methods that can be broadly characterized as scientific, and history, which is concerned with the uniqueness of each event. Echoing Krug, he wrote that social science “should be used to articulate the historical mode of thought.” He pointed out that if history had a structure like sociology or economics then it would be possible to predict future events based on the past (1970: 141). As each event is a unique phenomenon that cannot be replicated or repeated, history is largely without structure.

The New History also had proponents in America, of course, like Fenton and to a limited extent, Krug himself. They were not only opposed by social studies advocates, but also by traditional historians in their own fields who turned Krug’s argument against himself, urging that traditional repetition, memorization, and discussion of historical schools of thought should be the primary concern of schoolchildren studying history rather than a contrived inquiry using limited and pre-selected primary sources.

In his assessment of the New Social Studies, Beyer (1994) suggests that the inquiry method of instruction did not fit with the “preferred teaching style” of American teachers. David Hicks (2008) has recently done a comparative study of history and social studies teacher training in the U.S. and the U.K. By drawing on his own experience, and by interviewing new teachers in Britain and in America, he illustrates how the current generation of British teachers, themselves schooled in the New History, actively embrace constructivist and inquiry based history teaching methods. Their American counterparts, on the other hand, schooled in the textbook/quiz American social studies model, quickly tend to revert to that mode of teaching despite the best efforts of methods instructors who insist upon inquiry based instruction during the student teaching practicum. This contemporary example clearly illustrates the problems that American teachers must have experienced in the sixties, when curriculum designers of New Social Studies materials were urging teaching methods upon social studies teachers that the teachers had never seen modeled in their own education and training.

The differences in the organization and structure of the educational systems in the U.S. and in the U.K. account in part for the success of the New History and the failure of the New Social Studies. Britain has a national system of education that establishes curricular policy for the entire nation. The New History became the standard for British education in history after Dennis Shemilt filed his controversial study claiming success for the Schools Council History Project for 13- 16 year olds in 1980 (Deuchar, 1997, Little, 1990). In America, ultimate control over most curricular policy is localized at the level of the community or the school district. Federal grants that were the genesis of New Social Studies projects included no power to coerce; participation in New Social Studies curriculum reforms were always voluntary, and the decision to implement reforms was localized, often at the level of the individual teacher. Teachers who had no experience with inquiry based instruction and who were not forced to adapt to the new materials by their school administrations voted with their feet and largely ignored the new methods and materials.

Finally, the New Social Studies failed because the social studies do not exist at the university level from whence the curricular materials came, and the fact that American K-12 education is in many ways insulated or disconnected from higher education. Even when American school districts “map” their curriculum, or catalog the scope and sequence of that curriculum, the only input from higher education tends to be from educationists rather than from historians, scientists, or mathematicians. K-12 possesses a unity apart from higher education. It is not a coincidence that the best work in the New Social Studies tended to come from men like Fenton (who taught high school history as part of his Carnegie Tech teaching load), or Harold Berlak’s Metropolitan St. Louis Social Studies Center, which relied heavily on K-12 teachers for the instructional design of its materials. In general, however, when new curriculum

materials came from college professors in sixties, those professors had little understanding of the reality of the schools, and in essence offered “lite” versions of the type of work that graduate students in the academic disciplines might be doing. While the social studies claim curricular coherence at the level of the schools, that coherence is nowhere reflected at the university level. Apart from the one or two faculty members responsible for teaching social studies methods courses, the social studies as an academic discipline do not exist on the university level. The social studies operate without a university generated scholarly base; there is no “Department of Social Studies” on American campuses (Lee, 2005: 61). There is also not one “social studies inquiry method”; in fact, there is not even a discrete set of social studies inquiry methods. History and each of the social sciences that comprise the social studies have numerous inquiry methods that often do not fit with one another in a complementary manner. Krug (1967) wrote that if social scientists had not created a synthesis of the research and inquiry methods in their fields, it should be unreasonable to expect school teachers to create and teach such a synthetic inquiry method. With options for new materials and methods pouring forth from university faculty and researchers in each individual social science discipline, the New Social Studies often appeared to teachers as an incoherent and fragmented curricular policy. The myopia that Haas (1977) and Shaver (1992) ascribe to New Social Studies curriculum designers came about as a result of a system that has no coherent social science curricular organization from kindergarten through higher education. The New Social Studies ultimately failed in the United States because of an essential flaw in the social studies themselves as much as by local resistance to aspects of the programs.

There was no such inherent flaw in the British curriculum, where history already stood at the center. The British curricular debate centered on the relationship between history as an established content area and the ways in which insights gleaned from the social sciences could enrich the study of history in the schools. In the end, constructivist, inquiry based history instruction became the national standard. It was ultimately a debate over how history would be taught. This is not to say that the issue was not politicized; through the Thatcher years and beyond the New History was seen as a movement that deprived English children of an aspect of their patrimony, which was traditional national historical narrative. Waldman (2009) points out that the success of the New History despite serious conservative government opposition was due largely to the commitment of the teachers charged with delivering the curriculum. This is a very different situation than that found in America, where teachers never embraced the new methods.

As British secondary education was already intimately connected to higher education, new curricular materials issuing from the teaching universities did not carry the same alien sense as those produced by American academicians. Unlike America, where the schools are charged with teaching a subject that does not exist at the university level, the debate over the New History was a conversation over the relationship between history as an academic discipline at the university level and history as a school subject (Aldrich, 2005). The ideas that Krug proposed regarding the relationships between history and the social sciences were largely established as educational policy in Britain, and the tools of historical inquiry continue to dominate history education in the United Kingdom to this day. The fact that history was accepted as the core of social science inquiry in Britain, coupled with the fact that British schools have since the inception of compulsory schooling been under national control meant that when new inquiry based historical methods appeared they usually could be argued on their own merits apart from any rhetoric about what government control might mean. In America, the tradition of local control and the belief that one of the local school’s functions was to help insulate the local community from national or international violation stymied, and continues to slow national attempts at curricular reform.

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