

HOW THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM IS INEFFECTIVE AT  
PRODUCING POLITICALLY ACTIVE CITIZENS

By (Name)

The Name of the Class (Course)

Professor (Tutor)

The Name of the School (University)

The City and State where it is located

The Date

For a significant part of history, Americans have debated whether the public education

systems should create skilled workers for the economy or educate the younger generations on being responsible citizens. According to Kahlenberg and Janey (2017), both of these goals are essential. However, based on the recent rise of a global economy, the focus has shifted to serving the current marketplace's needs instead of preparing citizens. Introducing political education in the school program should be viewed as an elaborative procedure of sensitizing the younger generations about political socialization, promoting the culture of independent reasoning when developing their attitude or when making political choices. Though there might be other reasons, the American high school system has been ineffective at producing politically active citizens since the education system emphasizes equipping the learners with employability skills, lack of reforms, and reduced national commitment to school integration.

The educational reformers played a vital role in the creation of an imbalanced education system in the USA. According to Kahlenberg and Janey (2017), the educational reformers reduced their emphasis on the two-fold education system and instead started leaning more towards workplace skills. Notably, some reformers preach about education's economic values at the individualized student level by utilizing methods like reading and mathematics test scores, which are usually used to measure success. To date, the current high school education operates with the mantra of preparing the students to be "career and college ready." Through the same attitude, the learners develop the mindset of learning to be better employees in the market, with their success being measured through exams and routine tests. Thus, educational reformers need to stop over-emphasizing nurturing workplace skills in the education system.

Next, the American high school education system does not produce politically active citizens because its education system has not remained the same for many decades without any radical changes. Such a scenario is similar to how companies adapt to new trends and technology to stay relevant. As opposed to going through a revolution, the Americas high

school education curriculum has not changed over the past century (Parr 2012). The public sector's current education system used outdated teaching methods to teach the students how to be good servants through employment and careers. According to Parr (2012), education should be viewed as the breeding ground for culture, brilliance, optimism, and new thinking. Hence, since there is insufficient coverage of such aspects in the curriculum, most students graduating from the American high schools are less active politically.

The U.S. high school education system does not produce politically active citizens because of the reduced national commitment to school integration. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court made the landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* when it ruled that separating schools based on races are inherently unequal (Kahlenberg & Janey 2017). Further, more research also proved that having specific schools for the poor and the rich promotes inequality. Despite this ruling, the American high school education system has not obeyed the verdict and tends to practice the education system that supports such disparities. The majority of American high schools are not integrated, which makes it hard to underline the message of democracy. Hence, it is equally challenging to teach active citizenships in such school settings since some students already know that they are more deserving than the others.

There is a need for stakeholders in the American education system to redefine high school education's role. According to Zhang and Fagan (2016), schools have been viewed as an influential political and social agent. In this case, more emphasis should be placed on enhancing citizenship education in formal curriculum development. As a result, more American high school graduates will develop democratic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as the ideal polity members (Zhang & Fagan 2016). The American high school education system's primary role should be to enhance citizenship education articulated in the official policies and educational discourses that will eventually help the learners achieve citizenship status.

To summarize, it is apparent that the current American high school education system is not valid at producing politically active citizens due to some identifiable reasons. Some of these include misguidance from educational reformers that emphasize workplace skills, lack of reforms in the education sector, and reduced national commitment to school integration. A rigorous curriculum change is required to solve this issue. The high school education system should consider introducing history, literature, and political subjects to cultivate a culture where students believe in democratic values. Therefore, through these examples, one can state that the American high school system has been ineffective at producing politically active citizens. The education system emphasizes equipping the learners with employability skills, lack of reforms, and reduced national commitment to school integration.

#### Reference List

Kahlenberg, RD., & Clifford, J 2017. Putting democracy back into public education. *The*

*Century Foundation*, Available at

<[tcf.org/content/report/putting-democracy-back-public-education/?session=1](http://tcf.org/content/report/putting-democracy-back-public-education/?session=1)>

[Accessed 5 April 2020]

Parr, S 2012. We know our education system is broken, so why can't we fix it? *Fast Company*,

Available at

<[www.fastcompany.com/1826287/we-know-our-education-system-broken-so-why-can](http://www.fastcompany.com/1826287/we-know-our-education-system-broken-so-why-can)

't-we-fix-it'> [Accessed 5 April 2020]

Zhang, C, & Catherine, F 2016. 'Examining the role of ideological and political education on

university students' civic perceptions and civic participation in Mainland China: Some

hints from contemporary citizenship theory,' *Citizenship, Social and Economics*

*Education*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 117-142.