

Social Efficiency

- **Defined In Education:** Social efficiency is the position in education that calls for the direct teaching of knowledge, attitudes, and skills intended to shape the individual to predetermined social characteristics.
 - Social efficiency presumes to improve society by making its members more vocationally useful and socially responsible.
 - “[Social efficiency] rejects the notion of pursuing a study simply for the pleasure of learning.”
- “In the Social Efficiency ideology, the child is not the main focus. The focus is to develop skills necessary for society’s needs. The child is viewed as a potential adult member of the society. The Social Efficiency ideology places less emphasis on the individual needs of the child. It places more emphasis on the capability of the child to fill social needs of the society.”
- **David Samuel Snedden:** one of America’s pioneer educational sociologists concerned with education for social efficiency
 - Proposed a reorganization of studies; more “practical” subjects
 - “Snedden went a step further than many in the social efficiency tradition by proposing that a concerted effort be made to determine the probable destination of each individual in society and to prescribe a curriculum especially suited to promote his ultimate efficiency.” (PLATO/BOBBITT)
 - **“Sneddenism,”** as a scheme of education, was based upon “differentiation” of program according to the probable destination of the pupil and “flexibility” of course offering to meet differentiated needs. Individualization of the program meant placing the student into a “case group” of like destination. Membership in a given case group depended upon three variables: (1) environmental background, (2) ability, and (3) economic opportunity. He argued that only those students with optimum amounts of all three variables should be given education for those callings requiring a long and expensive period of schooling.
 - Less concerned with general education and more concerned with vocational training.

How Could This Be Applied To Music Education?

That’s kind of a tough question. I’m not advocating for this approach, but for social efficiency in music education a common track for a child might mean discerning at an early age a measure of the child’s musical talent, most likely followed by homeschooling: instruction would be on a particular instrument or in a specific style or genre of music, potentially of a certain religious belief, to eventually become a contributing member of religious worship or a community ensemble. Of course, my tendency is to believe that a formalized educational system of social efficiency would not place value on arts/music education at all, thereby shuffling all students into vocational training after attaining some level of general education.

Bergen, T. (1981). David Samuel Snedden: The Ideology of Social Efficiency. *Journal of Thought*, 16(2), 91-102.

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