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Why the U.S. Lags Behind

Daniel Myrick · Wednesday, April 20th, 2016

The United States is slow to catch up with reality and slow to adopt change. America's biggest problem lies in its isolationist nature. We have always been inwardly focused and, as such, have only one view of reality and little way to gauge policy changes.

The education system appears to be non-existent

From a background in linguistics, I find this isolationist nature most evident in our obsession with only one national language. Worse is the lack of desire to teach additional languages and, instead, [cut language programs from schools](#) as if they are simply luxuries.

Languages are not a luxury. They are a critical aspect of education. They are the window to other cultures and other ways of thinking. By understanding more cultures, we can understand what works and what doesn't work, thereby creating that more perfect union. By limiting ourselves to only one language, we are limiting ourselves to one line of thought that we can never grow beyond. This language barrier, in my opinion, is the greatest American tragedy and will be our downfall. Every time we find another part of the world to engage in war, we have to learn another culture, while that culture is already familiar with ours. We simply cannot compete with the rest of the world on any level when we do not understand the rest of the world.

That's one of a myriad of problems the education system has, but because we care nothing about other cultures we will never fully realize those inadequacies. So, generation after generation, we foster our own culture of uninvolved parents that rely on underpaid and underqualified teachers. That unsustainable system results in schools closing, classroom sizes growing and no culture for meaningful education.

The lack of education, and ability to be educated, manifests itself in the most barbaric ways. When we are slow to adopt change, we stay stuck in darker ages. Even though Americans talk the most about freedom, we care more about incarceration than education. Thus, the United States, even with a low crime rate, has a [prison rate four times higher](#) than any other country in the world. And that is just where our lack of concern for social welfare begins.

Health care is prohibitively expensive

One reason for our poor education system lies in the desire to control people through powerful political rhetoric. An example of this was by the overly naive William Jennings Bryan, who [defied the importance of gravity](#) because the suppression of logic promoted a moral good. Likewise, the suppression of scientific truths has kept our medical profession from any practical advances. As a result, our health care system is inefficient, non-functional and much more costly than it is worth.

The establishment of insurance networks were designed to benefit hospital's operations, even though doctors were consistently taught a hands-off approach to healing. Then, as the 20th century advanced our development, notably penicillin, major changes further restricted medical effectiveness. Licensure requirements of physicians meant that many treatments formerly

performed by nurses and assistants could only be performed by licensed doctors.

Also, in the late 1930s, the formation of the Food and Drug Administration began the regulation of drugs people could take. If history has proven one thing in the medical industry, it has been that drugs have been marketed for profitability sake and not for effectiveness.

The [nature of the cost controlled system](#) drove prices up and the inflation of the medical industry greatly exceeded inflation of the rest of the economy. Now, even though Americans pay more for health care than any other nation, we actually receive less medical care. For starters, the multi-payer system eats up 25% of costs just in healthcare administration. And patients are largely unaware of the mostly hidden costs since the majority of patients receive medical care via their employer-paid insurance.

Even the way healthcare is billed is inefficient. The ICD coding process, which all institutions use for insurance and medicare is rather complicated and comes with its own degree programs to learn how to do. It is also outdated. The United States just switched to the ICD-10 in late 2015. We were perhaps the last country on earth to switch to this version, which was developed in 1992. The UK switched to ICD-10 in 1995. We are so far behind the curve that, as we were adopting the ICD-10, most countries were already [preparing for the ICD-11](#).

Being able to actually treat patients seems about as realistic as being able to educate students or rehabilitate prisoners with our backwards logic.

We have a confounding government process

The United States spends more money on elections than any other country, yet has [one of the worst voter turnouts](#). Plus, all the money is concentrated within two parties. The United States is one of the few countries, and only western nation, without a multi-party system.

For over 150 years of the Republican-Democrat duopoly, we have not been able to progress as a society because we keep trading off misleading political ideologies. We get one party in majority power, find it to be ineffective and then elect the other party into majority, who then rescinds all the advances the other one made. This trend continues over and over as our nation backslides into obscurity.

This is either a result of our lack of education or the lack of education is a result of our political oppression. However you look at it, neither are a good situation.

Even though we are horribly inefficient in our political process, our education system, our penal system, our healthcare system, and so on, we still think we have the greatest country in the world and go to great lengths to preserve that image. Americans who go to other countries, learn multiple languages and see multiple cultures in action have a different education than Americans who remain isolated to only the American way. Clearly a perception shift must happen.

How to teach a reserved person something they don't want to know is something else entirely. A dedication toward education and a move away from high cost politics is not a realistic expectation given American reluctance to change or openness, but the only other option is the continued decline and eventual dissolution.

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