

# MODERN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

## ITS PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS

EDITED BY

JOHN C. ALMACK, PH.D.

*Professor of Education, Stanford University, California*



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## INTRODUCTION

By WILLIAM JOHN COOPER

*United States Commissioner of Education*

THE life of Ellwood P. Cubberley may be said to be contemporaneous with the development of the public school as a national enterprise. In the South in all save three or four States there were in reality no public schools prior to the period of the Civil War and the reconstruction. His period of professional educational service, however, falls on the first third of the twentieth century, the most fruitful period in our educational history, the period in which the public school has developed, has become almost universal, and has expanded upward to embrace the high school, downward to embrace kindergartens and nursery schools, and outward to become contemporaneous with life itself.

The United States has been an independent nation for barely a century and a half. For an equal length of time prior to its independence the thirteen original States were colonies of Great Britain. During the colonial period they had brought from England all forms of educational institutions known to the mother country up to that time. The dame school had furnished a mere literacy, the Latin grammar school was intended to educate a small selected number "for service in Church and State," and the college was designed to train primarily for the ministry which was by all odds the most highly respected profession. As a mat-

ter of fact, none of these schools were fitted to develop a type of culture which a civilized community wishes. It is not surprising, therefore, that they made little progress and that the next two or three generations of Americans were untutored and uncultured. They were busy clearing a continent and making a home for a better civilization. While they were engaged in this they developed the district school which, with the country home and the country church, are regarded as typical of that period of our history in which we were chiefly an agricultural people.

But it was in secondary education that the most notable change was to come about and the development of the American high school was simultaneous with our entry into competition with the nations of the world in industrial lines. By the end of the colonial period the academy had made a start. In it were combined a zeal for learning which was to furnish students for colleges and an application to the practical arts of living which was to prepare men to go into the world of business. But it was not until Ellwood Cubberley was a man in his prime that the high school took over the secondary field.

In the first third of the nineteenth century had come the yeoman service of Horace Mann in Massachusetts, of Henry Barnard in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and of numberless colleagues who really put education on a firm basis. It was at this same time that labor awoke to its condition. It organized itself, it struggled against a condition which permitted children to work from daylight to dark in factories, and set as its goal a ten-hour day for which it was to strive more or less for

half a century. In fact, labor stood for the removal of children from competition with adults; it was labor organization that in a sense made the American public school possible. At the same time also the victory of Andrew Jackson brought a political revolution. It was in his time that the voting privilege was extended to all males over twenty-one and popular election of state officers became general. In addition, in this period the test oaths were abolished making for the admission of Jews and Catholics to public office and the requirement of any religious qualification whatever for office-holding was done away with.

All of these things working together gave the American public school its start in the generation just prior to Cubberley's birth. When the Civil War had really freed the slaves and when the reconstruction period was over, it was ready to advance. In those years of Cubberley's life, which preceded 1900, were established the National Office of Education for the purpose of gathering statistics and disseminating information with regard to the American schools; there were beginnings in the national organization of educators. The National Education Association was holding important meetings, but it had no permanent organization. The National Society of School Superintendents had been meeting and was laying a foundation for its present great conventions.

The new breadth and depth of American life was making serious demands on the curriculum. It had been enlarged and reorganized. This was done by such committees as the Committee of Ten, the Committee of Fifteen, the Committee of Seven, and other

committees less well known today. In cities the school systems were being systematized, especially in Boston and St. Louis. A new type of university was appearing represented by Johns Hopkins, Cornell and Stanford, and the older type, such as Harvard, was being reorganized under the careful direction of Eliot.

Such was the condition which marked the beginning of the twentieth century when Cubberley came to Stanford University as an assistant professor in the Department of Education. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the scientific movement was approaching full vigor as an objective in education. The child study movement had begun. The great *desideratum*, "statesmanship guided by humane science," was at last in sight. To bring the worthy objectives of America nearer to realization, to expand the functions of the school, and to press tirelessly, fearlessly, and efficiently toward the goal — this has been the work of the first third of the twentieth century.

It will be remembered that Cubberley had taken his bachelor's degree from the University of Indiana, a university which had been reorganized and revitalized by David Starr Jordan. In the first place, Cubberley had been trained in science for an age which was to be primarily scientific; he possessed a zeal for truth which made him search for realities and made him build securely.

In the second place, he was endowed with certain personal qualities which distinguish a statesman. Partisanship as such had no lure for him. Above everything he placed the welfare of the individual, the State, and Nation, and above all he served the common good of

mankind. This had been his aim in the city superintendency of San Diego. It was this spirit of unselfishness which renders immortal the work of man and it is the same spirit which makes memorable the noblest events in history. It will be found well set forth in Cubberley's own book *Public Education in the United States*.

Thirdly, Professor Cubberley exemplifies the abilities of a first-class organizer and successful executive. He has revealed his capacity for planning on a big scale, to venture into new fields with confidence and courage and to stay by a program until it succeeds. He has set forth in his *Public School Administration* the aims, ideals, and program of modern school administration.

And in the fourth place, it is most important to have those traits which enable one to convey to others the great objectives and ideals of society; to show them the way to mastery and skill, to inspire them to bring their plans to fruition. This is above all a characteristic of the master teacher and in this capacity Professor Cubberley stands pre-eminent.

In brief, one finds in his life and writings those ideals which were born and reared in the years of our development as a nation. In this sense he is an embodiment of America. Unselfish, courageous, enterprising, and efficient, eager to know the truth and follow where the truth leads to the reality of the consequence. These are also characteristic of the man who is devoted to science. To express these characteristics in theory and practice, to give recognition to him as an individual, to express appreciation for him and his contemporaries for services well rendered, and to offer to guide young

men and young women now embarking on their careers in education are the purposes of this book, prepared by his friends and dedicated to him at the time of his retirement from Stanford University.



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I

THE SUPERINTENDENT AND  
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

BY GEORGE D. STRAYER, PH.D.

*Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*



# I

## THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE first superintendents of schools were appointed less than a hundred years ago. In 1837 boards of education in the cities of Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky, employed superintendents of schools. The development of the office accompanied and followed the acceptance of the principle of tax-supported public education. The need for this special type of professional service became apparent as systems of schools were developed to take the place of the separate small school units which had existed prior to the development of state systems of education and of city-wide organizations charged with the responsibility of carrying out the State's program.

In earlier days the local governmental authority, as for example the town meeting, accepted responsibility for the voting of funds necessary to maintain the school, for the hiring of teachers, and for the provision of buildings and equipment. This responsibility was later delegated to a committee selected from the general body, which was given responsibility for the maintenance of the schools and which reported to the general body.<sup>1</sup> An educated person — usually the minister or other professional person — gave some time to the supervision

<sup>1</sup> Henry Suzzallo, *The Rise of Local School Supervision in Massachusetts*. Teachers College Contributions to Education, Vol. I, No. 3, January, 1906.

of the work done in the classroom. With the acceptance of the idea of free schools to be attended by all the children of the community, and with the growth in size of urban communities, the problems to be met became more complex and the specialization of the functions both of general control exercised by the school committee or board of education and of the supervision of instruction were recognized. The school committee or board of education came first; the superintendent of schools followed naturally enough, as it became apparent that members of the board of education had neither the time nor the special professional qualifications necessary to direct and supervise the schools.

The school superintendency in the United States is a direct outgrowth of the dependence upon local authority to carry out the educational program adopted by the State. In this function of the government, as in most others, there has been a common acceptance of the principle of local responsibility and autonomy. If our States had developed a highly centralized government, it is conceivable that education would have been regulated by law and by rules laid down by the central authority, as in other countries. Such an arrangement leaves little need for local supervision and administration of the schools. Proceeding on the other basis, however, the States have even to this day refrained from any detailed control and have turned over to local government the responsibility for carrying out the State's program of education. Even in those States which have developed the most competent central authority in education, great variations exist among the several administrative units into which the State is divided, and

initiative and responsibility have been left to local boards of education.

The office of superintendent of schools has developed along with the teaching profession. Fifty years ago the professional qualifications of the superintendent were of a very meager sort. He was usually a man of some education and with experience in teaching. He was expected to be able to supervise the work in the classroom and to bring to the board of education recommendations for the development of the school system with respect to the organization of classes and schools, the selection of teachers, the choice of books and educational supplies and, in general, to advise with the board with respect to the efficiency of the school system. But along with the development of better training for teachers, the increase in the size and complexity of the school system due to the enrollment of all children in the schools, and the extension of the program to include secondary education, has come the professionalization of the administrative office.

Strangely enough, the provision of any special training for the superintendent of schools followed by more than half a century the acknowledgment of the necessity for professional training of teachers. Until the beginning of the present century, one was expected to be able to administer schools by virtue of the experience that he had had as a teacher, as a principal, or possibly as a subordinate in the superintendent's office. With the development of the scientific attack upon the problems of educational administration, there has come a recognition of the necessity for the professional training of the school executive and the need for more cer-

tain definition of the responsibility which this officer should exercise as contrasted with the duties and responsibilities of the board of education. Among the fields of special professional study in which the superintendent of schools should be qualified are:

... (1) the governmental control and arrangements for interpreting the desires of the community for education, involving the organization of public education in relation to national, state and local governments; (2) the financing of the educational program; (3) the registration of those subject to compulsory education and the securing of their regular attendance in school; (4) the organization of schools and of classes with reference to the differences which exist among pupils in intelligence, in physical condition and in vocational outlook; (5) the development of curricula and of courses of study which take account of individual differences and of the social objectives which the school is organized to secure; (6) the training, assignment, supervision, remuneration and tenure of the staff employed in the schools; (7) the co-operation of schools with other social agencies; (8) the provision of buildings and equipment suitable for the most efficient development of the program of education to be conducted in them; (9) the conduct of business affairs; (10) the reporting to the public with respect to the service rendered.<sup>1</sup>

Education is a function of the State. Throughout the United States responsibility for this function has been delegated to local bodies, commonly elected by the people or appointed by the chief executive of the local government.

The board for school control, however constituted and by whatever official title it may be known, is the successor in point of authority of the old town or district meeting, in

<sup>1</sup> George D. Strayer, "The Scientific Approach to the Problems of Educational Administration," in *School and Society*, Vol. XXIV, No. 623, December 4, 1926, pp. 686-87.



which the people met and represented themselves. There they voted taxes for the support of the school, selected a teacher or appointed a committee to do so for them, and then turned over to the teacher the control of the school. Later on they voted to delegate the testing of the qualifications of the teacher and the visitation of the school to those who could best represent their interests for them.

Boards for school control in our cities today, as the successors of the town or district meeting, now represent the people in the matter of schools, and through such boards the people now exercise control over the education provided at public expense for their children. The school board members are merely citizens, selected as their representatives by the people of the community. As individuals they are still citizens; only when the board is in formal session do they have any actual authority.

It is the board, acting as a body, which in the name of the people controls the schools, and not the individual members who, when in session, compose it. Even when the board is in formal session, the individual members have only a voice and a vote, and their control over the schools is through the votes whereby rules, regulations, and policies are adopted.<sup>1</sup>

The law commonly provides the method by which the board is to be elected locally, the organization of the body, the executive officers to be selected by it, the method of recruiting teachers and other employees, the duties of the executive officers, the power of the board to finance the schools within certain tax limits, and the power of the board to acquire sites, construct buildings, and in other respects provide for the organization and maintenance of a system of free public education.

The board of education cannot meet its obligations

<sup>1</sup> Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public School Administration*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916, p. 109.