

THE SCHOOL
AS A
SOCIAL INSTITUTION

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF
SOCIAL EDUCATION

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PREFACE

WITH the growing interest of the public in education, and the wider recognition of the prime social importance of the work of teaching, there has been a great expansion in the conception of the nature and purpose of the school. Whatever the remote functions of this important institution have been considered to be, it has been, and now too often is, regarded merely as a place where children are given possession of a definitely prescribed amount of subject matter. That crude, though fundamental, conception has been modified (especially for teachers) by the force of a psychological movement which has emphasized the idea that it is the development of the child that should be the great work of the school. To these two conceptions the needs of our present life are adding a third, — that of the school as a social institution. The demand for the emphasis of such a conception is found in practically all contemporary educational theory.

The author presents this work, not as a new discovery in education, but rather as an attempt to describe in his own way the most vital present-day conceptions of what the school has been, is, and is becoming. While he is deeply conscious of his indebtedness to his fellow-workers, he does not feel like saddling upon any the responsibility for this work. However, credit is given so freely in the text that the reader will not be left in doubt.

It is the purpose of this book to make available for teachers (actual and prospective), social workers, and citizens interested in social problems such a survey of the school as will present in a brief yet moderately comprehensive manner the

social significance of its educational work, its relation to other institutions and forces, its function as a determining and controlling force, its work as a protective agency, and its service as a community center, — not indeed comprehensive enough to be dignified with the title of Educational Sociology, but holding about such a relationship to that field as Educational Psychology has to General Psychology.

Although the school is not to be regarded as sole proprietor of the field of education, the author believes that the social conception of education will be given concreteness and force by being centered in the work of that institution. It is hoped that this will be especially true in the case of those young people, who, while preparing to teach, are themselves in school; and that the essentials of Educational Sociology will be made clearer and more helpful (particularly to the young student) by finding continual application to the work of a familiar institution.

Special mention should be made of the fact that after this work was finished and partly in type, the author learned that as long ago as 1909 a book with precisely the same title was projected by President Henry Suzzallo of the State University of Washington (then of Teachers College, Columbia University); and that he and his publishers, the Houghton Mifflin Company, very graciously gave their consent to the use of the title.

C. L. R.

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