

Principles
of
Democratic Education

*A Functional Approach
To Fundamental Problems of Teaching*

by

William Bruce

*Professor of Education
State Normal School, Oneonta, New York*

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Principles
of
Democratic Education

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Preface

ANY person faced with the education of youth at the present time needs to have in view a sound and democratic program. The purpose of this book is to help those students and teachers who would orient their educational procedures, and thereby strengthen the democratic way of life in their schools and communities, to see more clearly certain fundamental principles that are involved. Through an analysis of learning and teaching activities this discussion moves toward the establishment of a workable basis for the continuous reorganization of school practice.

Education and social progress are retarded by conflicts between diverse ideas which might be reconciled. In the United States, with our mixed heritage of pride in individualistic business enterprise and faith in the spirit of community co-operation, of practical emphasis upon specific habit formation and profound confidence in general intellectual education, of respect for religion and reliance upon scientific method, and many other confusing outcomes of our cultural history, the need of clarified thinking as a means of promoting substantial action is imperative. Since every member of the present generation inevitably picks up conflicting ideas about life and education, he must harmonize his diverse notions in order either to learn or to teach con-

structively. Thus, in order to promote intelligent social action, in each chapter of this book one or more crucial conflicts are presented and suggestions are offered toward practical ways of adjusting the contrasting ideas in an educational program. This adjustment centers upon the interpretation of democracy and the application of this interpretation in its many related aspects. The consideration of definite problems constitutes a functional approach so that the student organizes his own experience into a working philosophy of education.

Part I introduces the reader to the nature of the conflicts underlying much of the confusion about democracy and its schools. The origin of conflicting ideas from early childhood through adulthood is illustrated as an indication that the individual is too often unaware of his own intellectual conflicts. The rise of the informal school furnishes examples of the diverse sources of the continuous social change that makes the resolution of conflicts between the old and the new a constant task. The problem of "school marks" illustrates the necessity for co-operative action of home and school in the elimination of conflicts and shows how the confusions within the school are related closely to similar confusions in the economic world. Following this introduction, Part II deals with the resolution of certain conflicts arising out of changes in psychological viewpoints and methods of school practice. New implications for the personal development of the learner and the consequent widening of common interests in the community are discussed. With this scientific basis, Part III presents various aspects of the democratic outlook or philosophy of life and education, concluding with an emphasis upon the individual's social experience as the source and test of the democratic way of life.

These fundamental problems are discussed in nontechnical language so that the book may become useful to students soon after they enter a course in teacher education. The analysis of each conflict is designed to reach deeply enough to stimulate also the more mature student of education and the teacher who is daily encountering the actual consequences of the issues considered. Thoughtful parents as well may be aided toward an understanding of and participation in the changes now occurring in the public schools.

The notes at the close of each chapter are intended primarily to aid those who wish to go more fully into the subject considered. No attempt is made to indicate the specific source of each idea in the text, although the references taken as a whole include the books and articles that have proved most helpful. Since the exact location of quotations often is an aid in further study, such references are incorporated along with those that are more general. The notes for each chapter include a few cross references to other chapters, so that the reader may select any chapter and still have available support from other parts of the book. Each chapter with its notes is designed to have unity within itself as well as substantial relations to earlier and later chapters.

Although the writer must assume responsibility for the ideas presented, his obligations to others are many. Professional associates, authors, and former teachers have contributed, while students in his classes have given illustrations and criticisms. Specific mention of a few persons may be made. Boyd H. Bode, through his writings, his class discussions, and his personal counsel, has encouraged and guided over a period of years the thinking and writing underlying the present statement. The writer's deep obligation to the publications and lectures of John Dewey is made

evident throughout the notes as well as in the text itself. Indeed, these chapters might well lead the more serious readers into the pages of Bode and Dewey. The following persons have been especially helpful, either directly through constructive criticism of this manuscript or indirectly through their counsel: Clifford A. Bayard, Mary McClarren Bruce, Frank S. Freeman, J. Cayce Morrison, Henry Neumann, M. C. Otto, and V. T. Thayer. H. E. Buchholz, Managing Editor of *Educational Administration and Supervision* and of *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, has given valuable suggestions and has graciously permitted the use of material previously published in the journals of which he is the editor. Acknowledgment is tendered also to the editors of *Educational Method* and *The Journal of Educational Research* for permission to reprint certain material that has already appeared in their publications. The generous support and encouragement of Principal Charles W. Hunt is gratefully recognized. The writer's thanks are also due to John M. Baker, who has made an able criticism of the entire manuscript.

WILLIAM BRUCE

Editor's Introduction

The chaotic conditions in the world today baffle many of us who have pinned our faith to democracy as a way of life, and it is difficult to determine the direction toward which the governments of the world are heading. With autocratic Communism and totalitarian Nazism and Fascism dominating European civilization in the present and extending control in other parts of the world, we wonder whether democracies are not on their way out and whether our ideal of democratic education is a fantasy. Viewing the situation close at hand, we need not be surprised that extreme pessimism over the preservation of the democratic ideal exists. A longer view, however, should encourage us.

Throughout our civilization there have been two kinds of control—personal and social. Personal control characterized governments until the revolutionary period of the eighteenth century, which initiated modern social control, or democracy. Personal control has been characterized throughout history by various types of paternalistic governments, monarchies, and other forms of absolutism. The modified government, or social control—control through public opinion—was initiated and made headway particularly in America. European countries followed our lead, and, while there were continual reversions and reactions, a general progress toward

social control, or democracy, took place during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, it appears that the present reactionary movement may be a temporary one, and that, even in Europe, ultimately progress toward democracy will be resumed. In any case, it becomes necessary for America to reconsider fundamentally her whole democracy and the policies of democratic education.

No topic with which the American people are concerned is more significant. For this reason, any discussion of the principles of democratic education is opportune. This book makes a definite contribution to the democratic way of life through education.

E. GEORGE PAYNE

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PART I

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