

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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TO

PROFESSOR ELLWOOD P. CUBBERLEY

VIGOROUS STUDENT OF THE HISTORY, THE PHILOSOPHY,
AND THE PRACTICE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.

TO HIS INSPIRATION AS REFLECTED
THROUGH HIS MANY SCHOLARLY
TREATISES ON SCHOOL ADMINIS-
TRATION I OWE MUCH

PREFACE

This book essays to discuss the more urgent problems involved in the administration of a local school system ; whether the school system is large or small, the problems which confront the administrator of the system are very similar. Although the business phases of school administration have not been neglected in the book, the larger emphasis has been devoted to the problems of educational administration. The business problems of school administration have been fully treated in the author's *The Business Administration of a School System*, and if desired, that book may be used to supplement the present book.

The author makes no claim that all the problems which will ever confront school officials are discussed in this book. He realizes that no book, however large it might be, could be so inclusive, for there are hundreds of problems of school administration. All that the book attempts to do is to discuss those problems which wide inquiry has shown to be the more frequently occurring and urgent among local school officials. The book has been designed to serve as an introductory text and manual. The problems have been treated primarily from the point of view of the superintendent of schools and the board of education.

Suggestive questions for class discussion have been placed at the close of each chapter. In deciding upon which questions to include an attempt was made to select only those which would unfailingly direct thinking and discussion into and along interesting and practical channels.

In the selected references which appear at the close of each chapter no attempt has been made to list every reference, good, bad, and indifferent ; rather the aim has been to include

only those references which make a distinct contribution to the subject matter of the chapter. Even with this aim in mind the author was unable to include many excellent references because of space limits. In order that the references might be made more serviceable, they have been annotated in every instance. Through the suggestions given in these references the interested learner will be able to direct his reading over a period of several years.

The book could hardly have been prepared without the generous assistance of many persons, and for that assistance the author herewith expresses his gratitude. A large number of school officials coöperated by providing information regarding the manner in which they perform various school functions; this list of school officials is too long to mention by name. Miss L. Belle Voegelien, formerly the librarian of the Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, coöperated by making readily accessible the sources of the library of which she had charge; she also read, and gave many valuable suggestions for the improvement of, Chapter XXII, The Administration of School Libraries. W. L. Sprouse, the author's graduate assistant during the summer of 1927, gave great assistance in helping to prepare the lists of Selected References which appear at the close of each chapter. In particular the author is indebted to his students at Ohio State University; they have given many suggestions, and have been the proverbial "dogs" on whom the "poison has been tried" during the last seven years.

WARD G. REEDER

COLUMBUS, OHIO

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THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER I

FUNCTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC ENTERPRISE

Importance of education. — Education is not only the most important business of a state, but by facts and figures it is the largest business of the state. To elaborate upon the importance of education would be trite, for the story of the historic faith of the American people in education has often been told and is generally known. Suffice it to say that from the time of the founding of the first permanent English settlements in America, education has been regarded as the bulwark of a democratic government, as the best guarantee of a progressing society, and as an open sesame to the individual for the realization of his potentialities.

Size of education. — Regarding the size of education, it must be described as gigantic. Compared with other public businesses, far more money is spent in education, far more people are employed in it, and far more people are affected, either directly or indirectly, by it. In the typical state, county, parish, city, town, village, township, or rural community, nearly one half of all the tax money is now expended for education, and in the United States nearly three billion dollars is now annually used for this function.¹ To conduct this immense business

¹When the reader desires exact and up-to-date statistics on educational matters, he should consult what someone has called "the schoolman's statistical Bible"; namely, the reports of the United States Commissioner of Education.

more than one million employees — many more than in any other public business — are required. This huge army of employees has under its tutelage, administration, and supervision more than twenty-eight million pupils. These pupils are found on every rung of the “educational ladder” from the kindergarten to the university. During 1925–26, the latest year for which data are now available, the public elementary schools enrolled 20,984,002 pupils, and the private elementary schools, 2,143,000; in the public secondary schools there were enrolled 3,767,922 pupils, and in the private secondary schools, 340,801; the public colleges and universities enrolled 280,437, and the private colleges and universities, 486,826. Approximately one person in every four of the population of the nation now gives his working hours to study, teaching, administration, supervision, or some other phase of school work, and there are few homes which do not have at least one representative regularly in school either as a student or as an employee.

Growth of education. — Nor has the business of education yet reached its full growth — probably it never will and never should. School enrollment continues rapidly to increase, particularly in the secondary schools, colleges, and universities, and school expenditures per pupil are more than keeping pace with the enrollment. The increase in school enrollment and in school expenditures in the United States during recent decades constitutes probably the most significant fact in the history of education, whether of this country or of foreign countries. Although certain phases of it are occasionally criticized by foreign educators, the American school system as a whole has been the marvel and the envy of the entire world for many years. We prophesy that the discerning historian in future ages will record our school system as our largest social experiment and as our greatest contribution to the civilization of these times. In summary, education already constitutes the largest and the most important business of the American people, and what is of even greater significance, the faith in its efficacy — always strong — continues to grow.

FUNCTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Necessity for administration. — The important, gigantic, and complex business which has just been described cannot run itself. Every business, whether public or private, must be properly administered if it is to pay dividends in money or in efficient service. Stockholders of industrial concerns have historically been aware of the need for proper administration of such concerns, and for almost as long the public has been cognizant of the necessity for — though unfortunately not so insistent upon — proper administration of its institutions.

There are hundreds of details incident to the running of an efficient school or a school system for which someone must be responsible. Plans must be made and policies adopted; the plans and policies must be properly carried out or executed; and information must be collected which will show how efficiently the plans and policies are operating, and which will also become the basis for new plans and policies. This is a general statement of the function of school administration.

Typical administrative problems. — A more detailed list of the things which school administration does, or should do, is the following: makes the school budget and secures the revenue for financing the schools; sees that all school money is economically expended and accounted for; selects and purchases school sites; plans, erects, and pays for school buildings and equips them; sees that the school plant is operated and kept in an excellent state of repair; selects, trains in service, supervises and inspects the services of, maintains the *esprit de corps* of, pays, and promotes teachers and all other employees; provides pupils and employees with supplies; furnishes textbooks; arranges for school-library service; assists in curriculum construction; provides health supervision and medical inspection; supervises extracurricular activities; takes, organizes, and makes proper use of the school census; sees that the pupils attend school regularly; organizes an instructional program which will enable each pupil to progress at his own rate; measures accomplishments and efficiency of pupils, employees, and materials;

keeps the public informed of the aims, accomplishments, and needs of the schools; keeps school records and accounts; in brief, affords leadership to the whole school organization.

Of course, no list of the functions of school administration can be complete, nor are the specific duties of one school administrator exactly like those of another. Every year, every week, every day, the typical school administrator will have certain duties to perform which he may never have to perform again although his professional career may be long and varied. Most of the duties which are listed in the preceding paragraph are of a recurring and fundamental type and will be faced in all school-administrative positions alike. It is to those duties of a recurring and more fundamental type that this book is devoted.

School administration as a means.— School administration does not exist for itself; it is only a means, not an end. Schools are maintained only for the giving of education. School administration which facilitates education, and does so without financial waste, is justifiable and worth spending money upon; school administration which does not facilitate education is a parasite — a debauchery of public funds. School administration, therefore, exists only for the pupil, and its efficacy must be measured by the extent to which it contributes to teaching and learning; to teaching and learning it must always be a servant. It makes its largest contributions by providing efficient teachers and by furnishing them and their pupils with the proper tools and environment with which and in which to work.

If we did not fear the criticism of being trite, and if the space limits set for this book would permit it, we would relate hundreds of ways in which *efficient* school administration contributes to learning and teaching and by which it assures that financial waste will not result. Likewise we would relate ways in which *inefficient* school administration results in the pupils being cheated of much of their educational patrimony and through which it permits financial waste to continue. Suffice it to say that both efficient and inefficient school administration are represented in the thousands of American school systems, and that

probably no school system is administered wholly efficiently or wholly inefficiently; the experience of the most casual observer of school administration will agree with this generalization.

Occasionally we hear persons suggest that all school administration be abolished on the ground that it is parasitic. The persons who make this suggestion may usually be divided into three classes: first, those who are uninformed on the size, the complexity, the aims, and the history of education; second, those who are informed, but who are entirely unsympathetic or lukewarm toward public education; third, those who generalize on the basis of one, or a few, experiences — who, seeing inefficient school administration in *their* community and having no acquaintance with school administration in other communities, conclude that the sad plight of their community is typical.

It would, of course, be possible to act upon the suggestion of the critics aforementioned and dispense with the services of school boards, superintendents, business officials, principals, and other administrative employees. The elimination of such employees, however, would drag the schools back almost three centuries to the time when the people attempted to administer their schools without having a special administrative machinery and personnel; to take this step would probably result in waste and inefficiency becoming rampant. How the schools came to have an administrative machinery and personnel is briefly sketched in the next section of the chapter.

EVOLUTION OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

Early democratic control. — That the present prevalence of an administrative machinery and an administrative personnel for the schools is not fortuitous and ill-advised, but is the product of a gradual evolution — an evolution which parallels, and is a part of, the evolution of our school system — may be seen from a backward glance at education in the United States. In the early days, when society was much less complex and when the needs for education were not so great as to-day, education was a

much smaller public undertaking than it is to-day. In the pristine days of education there were no school employees except the teachers; school-board members and administrative employees were not deemed necessary — in fact, were not thought of. In those days the schools were administered directly by the people who met regularly in town¹ meetings and decided all questions *viva voce*. In these meetings decisions were made to erect and repair school buildings, school supplies and equipment were arranged for, the subjects which should be taught were determined, and teachers were selected and their compensations fixed. In fact, all questions of school policy and control were thus decided. Here was pure democracy in operation, and as the schools were administered so were all other public businesses.

The establishment of school boards. — The completely democratic control above described did not, however, long exist. As the size of education increased and as its complexity and technical nature came more and more to be seen, the people deemed it more expedient, from the standpoint both of saving their time and of securing a more rational handling of the problems of school policy and control, to delegate certain school functions to the selectmen² of the town. To be exact, completely democratic control existed only from 1636, the date of the establishment in Massachusetts of the first schools which were truly public,³ to 1654, when the Massachusetts Colony enacted a state-wide law which commended "the selectmen in the seuerall townes, not to admitt or suffer any such to be continued in the office or the place of teaching, educating or instructing of youth or child, in the colledge or shooles, that haue manifested ym selves vnsound in the faythe, or scandalous

¹ A *town* usually included a small village and the surrounding rural territory. It was, and is, typically a New England governmental unit. It is generally similar to the township of other sections of the United States.

² The *selectmen* may be regarded as the prototype of the town or city council of to-day; to them the people of the community delegated certain functions of government.

³ M. W. Jernegan, "The Beginnings of Public Education in New England," *The School Review* (June, 1915), Vol. XXIII, pp. 361-380.

in their lives, not giving due satisfaction according to the rules of Christ.”¹

First upon the initiative of the people of the towns and later according to the mandates of the legislatures, the selectmen were gradually delegated more numerous and more important school functions, and frequently the towns, upon their own initiative, elected special school committees for the performance of certain tasks. It was not until 1826, however, that the first state (Massachusetts) enacted a law requiring every town in the state to select a separate school committee and prescribed as its only function the general direction and control of the schools of the town. To these school committees or boards, however, which to-day are ubiquitous in every state and have large power, the people were slow in delegating authority; the large power which school boards now have has come to them only in slow evolution. E. P. Cubberley² has well summarized in the following words the transition from purely democratic control of the schools to school-board control:

We see here the result of two centuries of evolution in the organization and administration of public education. . . . The first professional act to be differentiated was the certification of the teachers employed; the next was the visitation and inspection of their work; and finally, the right to employ the teacher also passed from the hands of the people into the hands of others who represented them. At first, these representatives were the learned men of the towns — the ministers, or the men selected by the people for the general town government; finally, a special representative body (school committee) was evolved, selected because of supposed ability to direct the system of public education maintained, and to this body were transferred the educational functions formerly resting with the towns. The final compulsory establishment of school committees marks the definite recognition by the state that the people of the towns were no longer able *en masse* to handle intelligently those educational matters relating to the teaching function of the school. Such matters were now to be decided for them by their representatives (or by the state); the voting of school support alone still remained with the people.

The establishment of the superintendency. — The first large step, then, in creating a school machinery was taken when

¹ The quotation is from E. P. Cubberley's *Public School Administration*, p. 73. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922.

² *Public School Administration*, pp. 75-76.

separate school committees or boards were established to perform certain administrative functions. The next large step was taken when it was realized that the business of education was so large, complex, and important that special employees were needed to assist boards of education with its administration. To the student of modern education it is difficult to understand why this important step was not taken until 200 years after the establishment of the first public schools. Thus superintendents of schools came into being, the first city superintendency being established by Providence, Rhode Island, in 1836 and the first county superintendency coming about the same time. New York had provided for the first state superintendency in 1812. To the newly established superintendency, however, boards of education were slow in delegating functions. Soon, though, the office proved its worth and during the last five decades it has been established in every community and large functions have been delegated to it. Thus, to-day the school system of every state, county, parish, city, town, and village has a superintendent, and in the larger school systems there are many subordinate administrative officers, such as assistant superintendents, business employees, and principals. School administration has proved its worth over a century of evolution.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What would be the educational, civic, social, moral, and economic effect on a community which might choose to abolish its schools? What would be the effect on the individual?
2. Is education more necessary to-day than formerly? Why or why not?
3. Is education more important in a democracy such as ours than it is in a monarchy? Explain.
4. What possible explanations are there of the fact that no local school system in America employed a superintendent until 1836, which was slightly more than 200 years after the establishment of our first public schools?
5. What are some ways in which an efficient superintendent of schools can save his salary in the administration of his school system? What are some ways in which he can facilitate the giving of instruction?
6. What percentage of the school budget of your state or local school system is expended for administration? Do you regard that percentage as too large? Why? Would you recommend that a larger percentage be spent for administration? Justify your point of view.