SCHOOL EFFICIENCY

BENNETT

SCHOOL EFFICIENCY

A MANUAL OF MODERN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

BY

HENRY EASTMAN BENNETT

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

GINN AND COMPANY

BOSTON · NEW YORK · CHICAGO · LONDON

ATLANTA · DALLAS · COLUMBUS · SAN FRANCISCO

418.8

The Athenæum Press
GINN AND COMPANY · PROPRIETORS · BOSTON · U.S.A.

PREFACE

This work is the outcome of many years of experience in school management and supervision, as well as in the teaching of these subjects in college and normal-school classes. Its aim is first of all to be practical and genuinely helpful to teachers, and in the next place to set higher ideals in this field than are usually associated with the practical attitude. Experience has convinced the author that the gap between theory and practice is more imaginary than necessary, and this work is largely an effort to bridge that chasm. I have tried to reconcile conflicting theories and to outline a concrete plan of procedure in which many of the fine but uncorrelated and fragmentary discussions may be harmonized. It is recognized that many widely known statements, even some included in the "Readings" given in the text, are more or less in conflict with the positions taken here; but they are also in conflict with each other. As the book is for learners rather than for critical argument, attention has not been directed toward these disagreements in particular, but every effort has been made to encourage independence of thought. The point of view is further set forth in the first chapter.

I have had in mind the average school of average opportunities and the teacher of average ability. The temptation to think in terms of ideal schools and experimental schools has been put aside with reluctance. The discussions have been directed away from the peculiar problems of the rural ungraded school, with its one untrained teacher, and from those of the impersonal unit in the huge municipal machine,

though it is hoped there is something of value for both these, and I have thought rather of the community school of medium size, where the larger part of American teaching and learning is done.

My deep obligation is acknowledged to the hundreds of William and Mary men whose responsiveness has been an important guide to the things most worth while in this discussion; to the earnest corps of teachers in the Training School at Williamsburg, who have coöperated by testing out the more radical statements in daily practice; and to my wife and to my colleagues, Professor George O. Ferguson, Jr., now of Colgate University, and Professor John W. Ritchie, for their patient and discriminating criticisms during the preparation of the book. I am also indebted, for extracts and illustrations used, to the kindness of Dr. John Dewey, Dr. Lewis M. Terman, Dr. Clarence A. Perry, the Macmillan Company, Houghton Mifflin Company, Miss Flora J. Cooke, Miss Mary E. Murphy, Superintendent R. E. Hall, Director W. H. Magee, and others.

H. E. B.

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

CONTENTS

SCHOOL EFFICIENCY

CHAPTER I

EFFICIENCY IN MANAGEMENT

Scope of school management. The field of this subject lies anywhere between the specific problems of instruction in the narrow sense and the broad questions of administration and supervision. The lines of demarcation will necessarily fluctuate and overlap, rendering any definition of the subject arbitrary and of little use. Any topic may be regarded as legitimately in this field which aims to guide the teacher in securing school conditions, spiritual or material, favorable to educative progress. We may discuss anything from sanitary finger nails to national ideals, provided we are thereby clarifying our conceptions of the school conditions under which real educative results are best attained.

To avoid mere wandering about in so boundless a field it is essential that we be guided by certain principles. The following statements will serve as selective criteria for the discussions which follow.

Economy. *Good management begins with economy.* The management of a school, as of any other enterprise, has for its prime purpose the securing of the largest possible returns for the expenditure involved. Money paid for schools and the yet more valuable time of children are the investments intrusted by the public to the hands of teachers. Results, in the form of practical efficiency, mental power, character, and that intangible product called culture, are the

returns demanded. Inducing the people to increase their investment in schools is an important part of school administration, but the problem of school management is to give them as much as possible for their money, — to use no money for which value is not returned. Educators should realize too that this is the surest way to secure larger investments in the educational plant.

Demonstrable results. The time has come when *results should be of a more demonstrable and largely measurable sort.* Merely spending so many hours a year in "completing" time-hallowed "courses" in traditional "subjects" can no longer be accepted without challenge as adequate proof of efficiency. Nor should a school or system be measured by tests of its own devising. To encourage investment the net profits of an industry should be measurable directly by the investors. Objective measures of efficiency, somewhat scientific, are being developed in the educational world. However, an increasing ability to read appreciatively, to calculate accurately, to converse intelligently, to take an interest in the best things of life and to do well the things that most need doing — such results should be almost as obvious to parents and taxpayers as are dividend checks.

Management as educative as instruction. *The processes of school management are inherently educative in the highest sense.* It has been said that school is not a preparation for life; it *is* life. We may say that school is a preparation for life *because* it is life. Certainly school life is as real to those who are engaged in it as is business or industry or society. It is business and industry and society. The moral and social problems and the problems of practical work are as genuine and the motives as fundamental as any in later life. Class instruction in the formal subjects affords no disciplinary training of more permanent value than the practical and social situations of the child's school life. No

examination takes a pupil's measure so effectively as his daily intercourse with his fellow pupils. No habits derivable from the problems of arithmetic are more useful than those which may be derived from the problems of getting along with one's fellows. A fixed attitude of sympathy, justice, and coöperation toward the individuals and the social units which constitute the school counts more for good citizenship than the profoundest knowledge of history or the rarest appreciation of poetry. Furthermore, the very instruction itself can be motivated and vitalized in no way better than by using the problems of school organization as object lessons or as centers of correlation. *Good management will seize upon every school situation as a significant opportunity for instruction or training.* This by no means implies a "preachy" attitude on the part of the teacher. So genuine are the problems of school life that the teacher needs only to appreciate them fully to avoid any occasion for shamming.

Pupil's interest and school's welfare do not conflict. *The highest interests of the school and of the individual pupil are identical.* Each problem of management is to be considered both in the light of the educative significance for the individual pupil and that of the smooth running of the school machinery. Particularly in matters of discipline these interests seem often to conflict. Granted that, in schools as in nations, the government exists only for the good of the governed, there still remains the difficult choice between the view that "the school is nothing; the child is all" and the opinion that "the interests of any individual must give way before those of the group of which he is a member." We hold that either the sacrifice of the school for the pupil or of the pupil for the school is but a half-solution of any problem of management. It is but a makeshift at best. When the problem

is truly solved, the best interests of both school and child will be found identical.

The form and the spirit. "The letter killeth; the spirit maketh alive." Every great pedagogical idea, once the divine enthusiasm of its discovery cools off, tends to settle down in practice as lifeless formulas, systems, and methods. Ruts and routine are lines of least resistance, and all sorts of school processes tend to fall into them. In their rightful use they are invaluable; elsewhere they are deadening and ruinous. The best policies of school management soon become formalized and spiritless unless some warm-blooded enthusiasm keeps everlastingly vitalizing the forms. Ideals of management should have as a central aim the keeping of teachers' methods plastic and their ideas from petrifying. *The best thing that can be said of a plan of organization is that it forces teachers to deal with ever-varying souls and individual needs rather than with static subjects and systems.* Let us value any scheme of teaching as well for its reflex effect upon the teacher as for its direct effect upon the child and the school.

Generalizations and illustrations. A textbook cannot well be a storybook, and yet *principles are understood, and they are remembered, and they can be applied in just about the degree that they are thought out as specific cases.* An author condenses into his general statements an accumulation of particular instances and experiences. The reader will appreciate these statements in just the measure that he applies them back again to cases. It would be an easy matter to gather countless illustrative stories and pictures to illuminate every chapter of a work on school management. But anyone who has been a teacher or a pupil, or who will intelligently observe either, can gather the requisite illustrations from his own experiences. The effort of gathering these and the thinking involved in making the application

of principles to them is precisely the most profitable exercise involved in the study of the subject. It is the author's part in such a discussion to develop principles; it is the reader's part to illustrate them.

Conservatism, criticism, and radicalism. As to method of study we must steer between two dangers. On the one hand, there is our natural affection for those practices to which we have long been accustomed; on the other, there is the fascination of glowing but untested visions. Long experience makes us conservative. When the ideas about which we have centered our whole system of thinking are attacked, we feel called to a stubborn defense as of our ancient shrines against the inroads of ruthless vandals. But the young are prone to find little charm in the prosy past and see a universal panacea in every plausible plan. The past needs no defense. Its fundamental soundness may be taken for granted. Out of it has come all the good of the present and will come all the better of the future. But the true way to honor the past is to improve upon it. The only way to preserve it is to search out its weaknesses and remedy them. On the other hand, there is no universal solvent for pedagogical difficulties, nor will there ever be. As fast as one small problem of school management is mastered another one will be confronted. Progress must be slow and always difficult. Every slight contribution puts the art on a higher plane and every step forward is infinitely worth while because it brings us — not to the goal, but to the next step.

SUGGESTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. Think of this subject not as something to be prepared for recitation or required for promotion but as practical suggestions for making your teaching more valuable to yourself and to those you are employed to serve. As you read, keep constantly in mind

the question, "What is there in this which I can make use of in my teaching?"

2. *Read always with a problem in mind.* With the aid of the sideheads, challenge the text as to what it has to offer on each point discussed. At the end of each paragraph or chapter raise the question as to what you have got from it worth remembering. Re-read whenever necessary to make the points clear enough for you to sum them up in your own words. Review frequently the ideas that seem to you most worth while.

3. Recall or imagine a special case which illustrates each situation discussed. Think the statements into concrete instances. Preferably keep in mind some particular school — one you have taught or attended, or one you expect to teach. The problems at the end of each chapter are intended to guide you in this independent application. Substitute or add other problems for your own solution. Solve each as genuinely as though you had to meet it in reality. Such thinking requires time and effort, but nothing less can make a good teacher out of a poor one or out of one who is not yet a teacher. The situations discussed are not so rare but that the reader can furnish illustrations as well as the author. Doing so will prove the most useful phase of the reading.

4. Note that the "Problems" are not intended to test the reader's knowledge of the text. The thoughtful reader will constantly organize and review what he has read and what he has thought about his reading if he expects to retain what he has learned. The paragraph heads, summarized in the Table of Contents, will afford the necessary guide for reviewing and testing.

5. The references given as "Readings" have been selected with a view mainly to their ready accessibility. They are mostly either well-known texts or else government publications which may be had free or at a nominal cost. Read as many of these as you can and any of the other parallel discussions to be found in great abundance in educational reference works, periodicals, and books. Compare different statements carefully where they do not seem to be in agreement. Apparently conflicting statements are often due to slightly different use of technical words, or the difference between technical and popular usages of certain terms.