

**Riverside Educational Monographs**

EDITED BY HENRY SUZZALLO

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE

**THE EVOLUTION OF A  
DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL  
SYSTEM**

BY

**CHARLES HUBBARD JUDD**

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AND DIRECTOR OF THE SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY**

BOSTON, NEW YORK AND CHICAGO

*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is probable that at the close of the great emergency in which we now find ourselves this nation will undergo a notable reappraisal and a considerable reconstruction. A nation seldom makes large sacrifices for the maintenance of its ideals without becoming sensitive to practices which fall far short of them. Already we are deeply concerned to know just what qualities of personal character and precisely what kinds of human relationships are fundamental to the realization of a truly democratic life. We are asking whether or not we possess these in adequate degree, and how we are to overcome our discrepancies.

The American cannot long ask himself these questions without ultimately looking to the public school system for ways and means of rebuilding our national character and life. From the time of Thomas Jefferson it has been the habit of our national leaders to reassert the acute dependence of free government and free society upon

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

the organized system of popular education. Generally speaking, the people as a whole have accepted the doctrine that our schools are the most effective instruments we have for the conscious direction of our national life. It remains for the teachers to put this faith into practice more responsively and more scientifically than ever before.

The professional problem is one of more direct and effective social adjustment of school organization and teaching process to the ideals and conditions of our aspiring but somewhat chaotic American life. The philosophy of democracy needs an enlarged and more thoughtful use among school teachers. The traditional and the imitative tendencies of the teaching personnel must be supplemented by a newly acquired devotion to the checking of results. Long has an easy faith in our deductions of expected efficiency concealed our incompetencies in the achievement of both immediate pedagogical results and final social products. Some progress we have made, but it is quite inadequate to meet just criticisms which at the end of this war will

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

fall heavily upon the American school system. The educators must at once begin to prepare their minds for that new effective democratic service which the public will soon insistently require of them.

The first step is to know whither our present school system is taking us. What we have is the product of much indiscriminate borrowing from alien nations coupled with partial modifications forced on us by imperious influences native to our own life. But even these characteristically American influences have entered our school system in an isolated rather than a coördinated way. They operate in the presence of strange inconsistencies. Many factors in our national life which have a wide but subtle importance in our social scheme have failed to register upon our educational organization because public clamor has never imposed them upon professional attention.

The second step is to encourage an educational initiative and experimentation which will give to our American school teaching a more direct adaptiveness to our national social life. Amongst us, educational reform has operated with an air

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

of cock-sureness. If a new device could not promise perfection, it has not had strong proponents. This has been fatal to that openness of mind which gives experiment the large initial breadth which increases its chance of success. Vanity, both personal and professional, has attached to the origination of new plans of procedure and prevented the correction of errors in first thought. Moreover, we have been wasteful in our neglect of educational experience elsewhere than on our own trying ground. Our need is for more frank experimentation in education, one that is sensitive to the judgments of a comparative study of experience the world over.

The way to such a point of view and method is admirably suggested by the brilliant study of American education here presented. Its whole analysis is scientific in spirit and timely in method of statement. It ushers in the beginning of that new educational literature which the present large thoughtfulness of the profession must provide if American schools are to meet the huge American problems already staring us in the face.

## PREFACE

THE changes which have been going on in recent years in the organization of American schools are not mere superficial readjustments dictated by the whims of communities or individual leaders. There are, to be sure, minor reforms and counter-reforms which are purely local or transient in character. But back of these there are fundamental tendencies toward change which aim at the adaptation of schools to community needs. The feeling has been steadily gaining strength that our generation must shake off the institutional traditions of a past age and organize a sound scheme of democratic education. The present study is an effort to bring out explicitly some of the justifications for the reorganizations which are now under way. The book aims to bring to clearer consciousness the unique characteristics of our continuous educational system. It aims to point the way by which much of the present waste of pupils' time and energy can be

## PREFACE

corrected. It is a plea for a tolerant attitude toward the crudities of the junior high school. It is a plea for more coöperation in developing this institution.

The book limits itself to a discussion of the common school and to the facts regarding the high school which are directly related to the common school. The problem of high-school reorganization and the problem of a better articulation of high school and college are touched on, but not discussed in full. The reader will, however, be able without serious recasting of phrases to carry over all that is here set forth into the fields which lie outside the sphere of the present volume.

C. H. J.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

# CONTENTS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION . . . . .	iii
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	i
II. UNDEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS . . . . .	6
III. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AMERICAN SYSTEM .	19
IV. UNFORTUNATE BORROWING . . . . .	38
V. THE STRUGGLE FOR AN UNDIVIDED EDUCA- TIONAL SYSTEM . . . . .	56
VI. PRESSURE WITHIN THE HIGH SCHOOL . . .	71
VII. WHAT IS A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL . . .	83
VIII. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND ECONOMY .	95
IX. PRACTICAL METHODS OF PROMOTING REFORM	108
OUTLINE . . . . .	115



# THE EVOLUTION OF A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

## I

### INTRODUCTION

THE common school is sometimes described as a product of the Reformation. Before that period there was no thought of special training for ordinary boys and girls. The humble tasks of their daily lives called for no knowledge of the arts of reading and writing, and such skill as they required for practical occupations was acquired by imitation. There was no demand, even in the upper levels of society, for the education of girls. The duties of girls were domestic, and propriety forbade their training outside the home. It was only the sons of the aristocracy who were thought of as needing schooling. For them there were developed, from the twelfth century on, schools of law and theology and places of training in the arts of war and the hunt. Education

## A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

began as an exclusive right of the sons of the aristocracy.

By the time the Puritans came to New England matters had progressed. The common man had reached a level where he had a right to schooling. But the traditions of aristocracy were still strong even in New England. The clergyman and others of the professional class were men apart, and the schools which prepared them for their life-work were exclusive institutions. Even as late as Revolutionary times a democratic system of education had not been worked out.

Then came the period of rapid growth of republican ideas when the Nation framed its Constitution and set up its machinery of popular government. Still there lingered in the schools traditions of aristocratic exclusiveness in the form of separate schools for the professional classes; and for a long time these traditions could not be set aside in the interests of democratic schools.

The prospects of advance toward a strictly democratic educational system were bright as a result of the growth, in the early years of the

## INTRODUCTION

nineteenth century, of the American academy and of the district school. But in the midst of this advance, in the middle of the last century our leaders carried us back toward medievalism by borrowing from the least democratic nation in Europe one of its fundamental institutions. They brought to America the Prussian common school. The eight-year elementary school of the United States is a transplanted institution. It does not belong to us, and it is not in harmony with our evolution. It has acted as an obstacle to the growth of a unified school system.

For more than half a century we have tried to expand it and thus to make it democratic. But during all this time we have not succeeded in radically altering its form. Of late we have begun to understand that what is needed is thoroughgoing reform, not compromise. During the last decade many cities have adopted a form of organization known as the six-and-six plan. This abandons the eight-year elementary school with its Prussian course of study for an organization which is at once more economical and broader in the outlook which it offers to its pupils. The

## A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

experiment has been somewhat chaotic and many observers have been pessimistic. Some are in doubt about the wisdom of the experiment even to-day. But progress is under way and this progress is toward a school system which will eliminate the Prussian eight-year common school.

In the midst of the hesitating experimentation of recent years have come the present awakening of a national consciousness and a new devotion to democracy stimulated by the revelations of the goal toward which Prussian education leads. The contribution which the schoolman can make to the new era is clear. He must bring about speedily those changes which have been waiting for slow evolution. He must study the new conditions of life, and create an educational system which shall be no imitation of an old aristocratic model, but a true expression of the spirit of a free democracy.

To this end it is fitting that the distinction between an aristocratic school system and a democratic school system be carefully drawn. It is fitting that the history of American schools be sketched so as to show where these schools have

## INTRODUCTION

made achievements and where they have failed. With this contrast and with these facts in mind it will be legitimate to suggest the steps which must be taken to complete the reforms which have been moving but slowly in the past.

## II

### UNDEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

AMERICANS have long been accustomed to hearing the public school lauded as the foundation of democracy. It is not unnatural that they should fall into the mistaken belief that any scheme of universal education is of necessity democratic. The example of Germany completely refutes this belief. The educational system of that country is and has been for generations a wall of defense to aristocracy and a device for disciplining the common people into willing subservience to this aristocracy. An examination of some of the leading characteristics of the German schools will serve two purposes. It will furnish a contrasting background for a later discussion of the democratic tendencies in our own system and will at the same time show how gross a blunder was made in the middle of the last century when one branch of the German system was imported into the United States.

## UNDEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

The German school system is made up of two separate compartments. One is for the common people and is called the *Volksschule*. The other is for the aristocracy. The latter is subdivided into several institutions which differ slightly from each other, but for our purposes may very properly be typified by the *Gymnasium* which is the oldest and still dominant form of aristocratic school.

There are minor deviations from the types of organization which we shall discuss. The smaller German States have *Volksschulen* and *Gymnasien*, which in their primary departments are not as completely separated as are the schools of the great States where there is absolute separation from the first year to the last. In some German States there are certain so-called middle schools which stand between the two extreme types. In all the States schools for girls have grown up in recent years which are somewhat divergent from the historic patterns planned originally for boys. But when all these minor and local differences are taken into account, the one clear outstanding fact is that the German schools fall into two sharply distinguished systems.

## A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The *Volksschule* and the *Gymnasium* are altogether different in their methods of training teachers. The teachers of the *Volksschule* are graduates of that school who have afterwards been trained in an institution known as a *Lehrerseminar*. This institution has no connection with the university. Before the war, teachers of the *Volksschule* were allowed to take courses in the university only in the one State of Saxony, and the university privileges there reluctantly granted were so hedged about that the concession was practically without value. Even in Saxony the teacher in training for the common school had absolutely no access to the university. In no other State were even experienced common-school teachers allowed to study in the higher institutions of learning.

The teachers of the *Gymnasium*, on the other hand, have entirely different training. No *Volksschule* graduate ever becomes a teacher in the *Gymnasium*. No *Gymnasium* teacher has ever been in a *Lehrerseminar*. The teachers in the *Gymnasium* are products of the higher schools. They are first of all graduates of the *Gymnasium*



## UNDEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

itself. They then take courses in the university. After completing courses in the university the prospective teacher of the *Gymnasium* takes an examination set by the State, and if successful goes to a *Gymnasium* for a period of apprentice training. Here he is drilled for two years in the ways of the teaching staff and, under the closest supervision of the principal and teachers, absorbs the ways of thinking and acting which will fit him to perpetuate the traditions of a school devoted to the educating of a highly selected aristocratic class.

The sharp distinction between the methods of training teachers in the two schools of the German system is of importance to us in this country, because in 1838 Massachusetts, through the enactment of the Normal School Law, established the first American training school for teachers of the common schools on the model of the Prussian *Lehrerseminar*. The American normal school was in no way related to the college; nor was it a part of the original purpose of this school to train teachers for the high school. The normal schools were institutions apart, sep-