SECONDARY EDUCATION

BY

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NEW YORK

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1934

Published September, 1933; reprinted April, 1934; October, 1934.

SET UP, ELECTROTYPED, AND PRINTED BY T. MOREY & SON

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

When I began teaching secondary education not so many years ago there were only two books in the general field, E. E. Brown's *The Making of Our Middle Schools* and J. F. Brown's *The American High School.* Shortly there appeared two volumes of composite authorship and the monumental contribution of the lamented Alexander Inglis. Since these there have followed a flood of treatises on many phases of the complex institution that attempts at the same time the dual task of being a terminal school for some and a preparatory school for others. Most of these books are factual in their nature, few attempting to clarify the special functions of the institution or to discuss the more fundamental principles on which it is built.

This volume ventures to present and to open for further discussion some of the basic problems that must be solved before our secondary schools can find themselves and advance toward the great contribution it is possible for them to make to social and cultural progress. It offers not so much a picture of what is as a vision of what may be. In a sense, most of the chapters directly or indirectly concern the new curriculum that will be functional in a democratic society. The facts of current practice are fairly well collected and presented, especially in the recent reports of the National Survey of Secondary Education. The program of what the schools should do is yet to be made.

In the belief that most expositions of comparative secondary education and of the history of secondary education in our country are too brief to give a helpful understanding of European practices and of the undirected development in America, somewhat extended chapters on these subjects begin the book. A consistent attempt is made to show what we should consider, to emulate or to avoid, in the practices of foreign cultures, and to reveal what we should learn from history. It may be noted

that the historian has a fertile field for study in the development of our secondary schools during the nineteenth century. As the data have not been gathered, only an inadequate picture can be given of that period.

It is an oft-repeated principle that our schools should be adapted to the civilization in which they exist. To emphasize the rapid and significant changes that have taken place and are still continuing in our civilization, a chapter presents some of the phenomena that should lead to a vastly changed curriculum. This is followed by a composite from the psychologists of the facts of adolescence that should enable us better to understand and to educate youth. Unfortunately many excellent psychologists are not educators, and in consequence their treatises too frequently confuse with abstract facts rather than help the student who is looking for practical help.

Next there follows a discussion of the issues, conflicts of theory with theory or of theory with practice, that seem to be inherent in secondary education in the United States. A satisfactory program can not be formulated until all of these issues are honestly faced, all of their implications considered and decisions made as to which alternative we shall follow. It is not too much to maintain that this is fundamental to sound progress. The discussion of issues is followed by an attempt to define, as has not previously been done, the special functions of secondary education. When these are approved, with or without amendment, there will remain the tremendous challenge to develop a program that promises their reasonable achievement. It is only after the special functions of each of our administrative units are determined that real articulation, which is next discussed, can be effected.

The curriculum is the outstanding challenge today for all schools. Involving everything else of importance, one's philosophy as well as all facts, the problem of what to teach is far more complex than it has ordinarily been conceived in the recent movement toward reorganization. The ideal solution of the problem is yet far off; but if educators will follow such a

program as is proposed, tedious and difficult though it be, they will manifest the professional competence and courage that should characterize them. There is no short cut to great achievement, and a new curriculum appropriate to the needs of a new civilization is well worth any amount of effort. An attempt to construct such a curriculum, if given the proper explanation and publicity, will undoubtedly meet with a large degree of popular approval. No other kind of curriculum revision is of real importance, and a continuance of tinkering with outworn tradition will still further undermine public confidence, which is already dangerously weakened.

The next two topics, the emotionalized attitudes and the mores, are included, rewritten and enlarged from the author's *Curriculum Problems*, because they must be considered and used in creating the new materials for education. Volumes have been written about character training, but it has apparently not been noted that what we mean by one's character is the sum of his attitudes, highly emotionalized, toward problems of conduct. The mores, too, are intimately related to morals. The attitudes also, as is clearly pointed out, affect the intellect in ways that are seldom suspected.

A lengthy discussion is next given of liberal or cultural education, an attempt being made so to define it that the secondary school can intelligently seek to achieve it in all pupils. It can fairly be asserted that most discussions of this topic are so erudite and abstract that they have had and can have little effect on practice. But erudition, however impressive, without direction of a curriculum and of teaching is useless in this pragmatic age. Like the other important elements of the new curriculum, a liberal education can not result from any instant magic; it can be achieved only by the long continued and skilful effort of teachers who not only understand what it is, but also possess it in large measure themselves.

The volume concludes with a vision of what secondary education may be, and in the author's judgment, should be. First are adduced important facts, not tabulated and tortured by sta-

tistics—they can be easily found elsewhere—but presented in a roughly sketched picture that reveals what we have on which to build. Others may have a somewhat different vision. It is by dreaming dreams that we may get out of the rut of tradition and turn with full speed and confidence of what we want on to the highway of progress.

Acknowledgment is made to the several publishers and authors who have generously granted permission for quotations: D. Appleton and Company, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* (11th edition), Ginn and Company, Henry Holt and Company, Houghton Mifflin Company, J. B. Lippincott Company, Longmans, Green and Company, The Macmillan Company, John Jos. McVey, the *Scientific Monthly*, Silver, Burdett and Company, Simon and Schuster, Inc., the *Teachers College Record*, the Yale University Press. Especial acknowledgment is made to *Collier's* and to Scott Brown, the artist, for permission to reproduce the cartoon facing page 506. I am especially indebted to my friend and colleague, Professor I. L. Kandel, for numerous facts.

T. H. B.

NEW YORK CITY
August, 1933

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CHAPTER I

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The secondary schools of the United States are in some respects like and in others markedly different from those of other countries. Although greatly influenced during the early years by the traditions of England, our schools have developed with a surprising later ignorance of those in other civilized nations and with little influence from them. Marvelous as they have been in growth and astounding as they are in numbers, it is quite possible that their form has not yet been fully determined, that there are changes which may profitably be made. Not only the lay public, but even students of education too often accept them as established and permanent phenomena. Some knowledge of secondary education as provided by other countries may serve several good purposes in our attempt to improve our own institutions. It is of course true that every nation has its own peculiar characteristics and problems.

A knowledge of practices and proposals by foreign countries may be helpful in any of several ways. It may by revealing differences call attention to features that are peculiar to our schools and thus raise them in question. This may result in a more intelligent approval or to an understanding of the wisdom of attempting improvement. It may reveal weaknesses or failures which we should avoid or which, having avoided, we can continue to guard against; or superior practices, which we may well emulate. It may call attention to unsolved problems common to all systems, problems that must be attacked by each nation according to its peculiar conditions. It may merely

increase appreciation and admiration for our own system of schools and strengthen our faith in it. One should read of foreign schools with constant effort at understanding of environmental and traditional differences and with an open-minded desire to gain suggestions for the improvement of our own schools.

If one will think of the difficulty of characterizing for a foreign reader our own system of education, he can somewhat appreciate that of explaining foreign schools to our students. We have high schools of three, four, and six years; in some communities junior high schools and junior colleges; in others none. We have comprehensive and special high schools. In only a fraction of our communities are there the important evening, continuation, and summer schools. And as for curricula—they vary from the single, traditional, desiccated academic offering to enrichment and differentiation. To some extent there are similar differences in all other countries. Another difficulty of presenting a picture of their practices is the fact that during the past few years there have everywhere been material changes in secondary education, changes that are continuing and probably are far from complete. Usually there is a tendency to report the novel as if it were typical. Every significant social change ultimately, though often tardily, is reflected in secondary schools; everyone is to some extent cognizant of the social revolution that is now under way, and he should expect to see it gradually reflected in educational practices.

After visiting the schools of five European countries S. A. Courtis remarks on "the utter impossibility of appraising European practices in terms of American ideas and standards. The schools of each country," he continues, "reflect the ideas and conventions of that country, and can be rightly interpreted only in terms of the culture to which they minister.[1] . . . Caste and tradition are ruling forces. The culture in each country is, relatively, quite homogeneous. The primary task of education is to interpret that homogeneous culture in terms of its homo-

[1] See "The Philosophy Underlying National Systems of Education," *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute, 1929.*

geneity. The outsider must learn to observe, think, and interpret in terms of strange concepts, foreign viewpoints, an unfamiliar vocabulary, and different customs before he dare claim to understand." But at the same time conditions are not nearly so unique as a hundred years, or even a generation, ago. It is only reasonable that, keeping in mind the differences, we can learn much from what older civilizations have learned by experience or have proposed by genius.

Because of limitations of space it has been possible to present in brief outline an exposition of the secondary schools of only three countries, but one would find it both interesting and profitable to read of those in other countries as well—in Japan, which when adopting occidental customs was free to choose the best features that it could find; in Russia, which is experimenting with a new social and political order; in Italy, where an entirely different form of government is effectively using education for its perpetuation; in Bulgaria, which overthrew an old government of the aristocracy and established one of the people; in Denmark, which has a vastly different conception for at least a part of its secondary schools. References for readings regarding all these countries are given in the bibliography.

It will be found that at the beginning of this century many countries became concerned about their secondary schools. In general there has been a movement toward increasing opportunities, toward democratization, toward clarifying objectives, and toward modernizing the curriculum. Despite occasional eddies, the current is flowing in these directions. No other nation has gone so far as the United States in offering a free higher education, theoretically appropriate to the needs of each individual, to all youth; and no other one seems likely to imitate our plan of a single "comprehensive" school for all types of adolescents. England, France, and Germany still hold that secondary education is solely for the intellectual élite. In none of these countries does the term "secondary education" include training of other than gifted youth for success in foreign languages, ancient or modern, the mother tongue, history and geography, science and

mathematics. England has been most successful in character training through the perpetuation of its fine social traditions, though at present it is giving greater attention to intellectual training suitable to each gifted individual. France attempts to perpetuate its culture largely by means of the academic, even the classical, approach. It emphasizes scholarship and the ability to speak and write meticulously well as a means of training youth to think well. Germany is using all approaches to civilization in their significance to its national culture. More than any other Western European nation it seems to realize the importance of education for the promotion of the interests of the State. But because secondary education is interpreted far more widely with us, some attention is given in this chapter to other types of schools that are provided for youth who have completed an elementary academic training, but schools that are not called "secondary" in Europe.[1]

England

The English System.—To an American the English system of education is confusing, partly because it is complex and irregular or inconsistent, and partly because words with which he is familiar are used in senses that he does not know. The "public" schools are privately established and controlled, and "modern upper remove" as the designation of a curriculum stage carries no meaning to him, however familiar the words. A British writer has said that few people have a complete or even a working knowledge of the national legislation regarding schools. And yet in their way the English are working out a system of education different from others and in their judgment suited to their circumstances and needs. Cyril Norwood has written: "The educational system of this country is not logical, nor has it symmetry: it has not been thought out by legislators or statesmen, and imposed from above upon the nation. At the same time, it is not haphazard, but it has grown from practical

[1] For the English attitude, see the *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute, 1930*, pp. 205 f.

needs, and is now indissolubly bound up with the national life. It can not be understood apart from the national history, for it is the product of the national character. One prominent feature of that character is its capacity for making an illogical compromise work in practice, and for getting things done without bothering over-much about theory. We are tolerant of anomalies, and patient with survivals, so long as they produce results that are worth while." [1] As in our country and unlike that in France and in Germany, the chief legislative body has never manifested great interest in education, and yet in the momentous year 1918 it passed the Fisher Bill, which laid down the outline for a comprehensive program, as yet realized only in small part, for the nation. Usually legislation has been a compromise with practice and permissive rather than mandatory. "As soon as the people at large have experienced the benefits of it, and have overcome their conservative antipathy to something which is new-fangled and therefore suspect, compulsory legislation is introduced." [2]

Until the beginning of this century, when legislation made possible the public maintenance of secondary schools, it could hardly be said that there was in England an educational system. There were, rather, two systems of schools existing side by side, overlapping and uncoördinated: free elementary schools, which might be continued into the lower reaches of a higher education, for "the children of the laboring poor"; and private secondary schools, which usually had affiliated preparatory departments, for the sons and daughters of "the better classes." There was also a relatively small number of technical and scientific schools. Thus toward the end of the nineteenth century there were in the great cities, but seldom elsewhere, "schools belonging respectively to the elementary and secondary systems whose curricula were, in essentials, identical, which prepared their pupils for the same public examinations, and the same kind of

[1] Norwood, Cyril, *The English Educational System*, Benn, London, 1924, pp. 9–10.

[2] Sandiford, *Comparative Education*, p. 186.

material equipment—and yet were wholly distinct in 'atmosphere' and tradition and faced one another uneasily across a social gulf." [1] Up to that time secondary education was provided almost entirely by private schools, one of them founded as early as 1382, a small group—Winchester, Westminster, Shrewsbury, Harrow, Eton, Rugby, and Charterhouse—being famous the world over. These are "private" in the sense that Yale, Smith, and such other of our institutions are.

The Acts of 1902–03 endeavoring to extend the privileges of secondary education empowered the county councils and county borough councils to aid existing schools and to found new ones. Now there are secondary schools entirely independent of the government, others which although private or even sectarian are aided by government grants, and others still that are entirely public in support and control. "Secondary schools may be maintained or aided. In the former case the local authority defrays the expenditure and receives the fees which are usually charged. The Board of Education then pays to the authority fifty per cent of its net expenditure. Aided schools may receive grants from the Board or from the local authority or both. . . . A process of adjustment is gradually taking place which will ultimately result in half the public contribution coming from the Government and half from the local rates." [2]

Central Authority.—Unlike most other European countries, England has in the past centered little educational authority in the Government, but the tendency now seems strongly in that direction. The Board of Education is a mythical body which has never met. At its head is the Minister of Education, a member of the Cabinet, appointed by the Crown and responsible to Parliament. Like the Secretary of War or of the Navy in this country, he is usually a layman. For his professional aids he has an indoor staff of higher officials, a more or less permanent staff of inspectors, and a consultative committee of twenty-one

[1] Nunn, *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute, 1926*, p. 463.

[2] Perkins, *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute, 1924*, pp. 203–204.

members representing every educational interest. This Committee "reports only on questions referred to it by the President of the Board and has no power to raise points of its own. It is nevertheless a very authoritative body and its most recent report (Education of the Adolescent) is already having a marked effect on policy." The Board of Education recommends policies for the schools of the nation, sends out its inspectors to criticize and approve schools, supervises the training of a large proportion of the teachers, and determines the distribution of funds voted by the Government. It is reluctant to use such powers as it has to interfere with school programs, preferring to leave with the local authorities, borough or county, and with the individual administrations the widest latitude. "England," declares Sir Michael Sadler, "has discovered an administrative method which enables her to inspect and aid a great variety of schools and so to preserve variety of educational traditions and ideals."

The Fisher Act of 1918 was a far-sighted effort for "the establishment of a national system of public education, available for all persons capable of profiting thereby." Quite properly it involved certain economic and social matters, such as child-labor and health. It extended the age of compulsory education to the end of the school term in which a child attained his fourteenth birthday, permitted local authorities to add, as they have seldom done, a year to this period, and required pupils who left school at fourteen ultimately to attend continuation schools for 320 hours annually up to the age of eighteen. It not only proposed that fees in secondary schools be abolished, but provided for maintenance grants for necessitous children. And it provided for an increase in opportunities for secondary education of several kinds, academic and vocational. For a number of reasons the provisions of this notable Act have not all been fully carried out, but it indicates the direction in which England is bound.

Another instance of the influence exerted by central authority is the report (1926) of the Consultative Committee on The Education of the Adolescent. Beginning with an explicit rejection of the idea that the distinction between elementary and

secondary education shall be based on social differences, the report proposes that at the age of eleven or twelve every child shall enter upon a definite new phase of education, preferably in a new school organization, not intermediate between primary and secondary, but differentiated according to the varying powers and needs of the pupils. There is no idea of the abandonment of selection for higher education, but rather an intent to increase the equality of opportunity and to provide in comprehensive or in special schools some further education appropriate to those not academically gifted or inclined. The bases of differentiation would be the age to which a child is likely to remain in school and his interests and abilities. To care for the differences it proposes three types of schools, which already to some extent exist in such centers as London: (1) "grammar schools," with a curriculum predominantly literary and scientific; (2) "selective modern schools," which though not narrowly vocational are biased toward the practical requirements of commerce and of industry; and (3) "modern schools," which any non-selected pupil may enter, offering curricula that must of necessity be on a lower level. "It seems likely that progress along the lines of the Report will take place gradually and by the piecemeal utilization of the powers already in the hands of the local authorities rather than by fresh general legislation."

Types of Secondary Schools.—By reference to the accompanying chart the general relation of the most common types of English schools may be seen. At five or six years of age a typical child enters an elementary school, usually one "provided" and maintained or "non-provided" but maintained by the local authorities. The sons of professional men and the aristocracy frequently receive their preliminary education in private preparatory schools, of which there are about seven hundred, called "efficient" after inspection, but not grant-earning. They enroll more than 7000 pupils. At eleven, or thereabouts, the children take a competitive examination. The best gain an opportunity to enter a secondary school, often with a scholarship that pays fees and with additional maintenance grants for clothing and

other necessities; the next best are qualified for a central school; [1] and the others have compulsory education in higher elementary

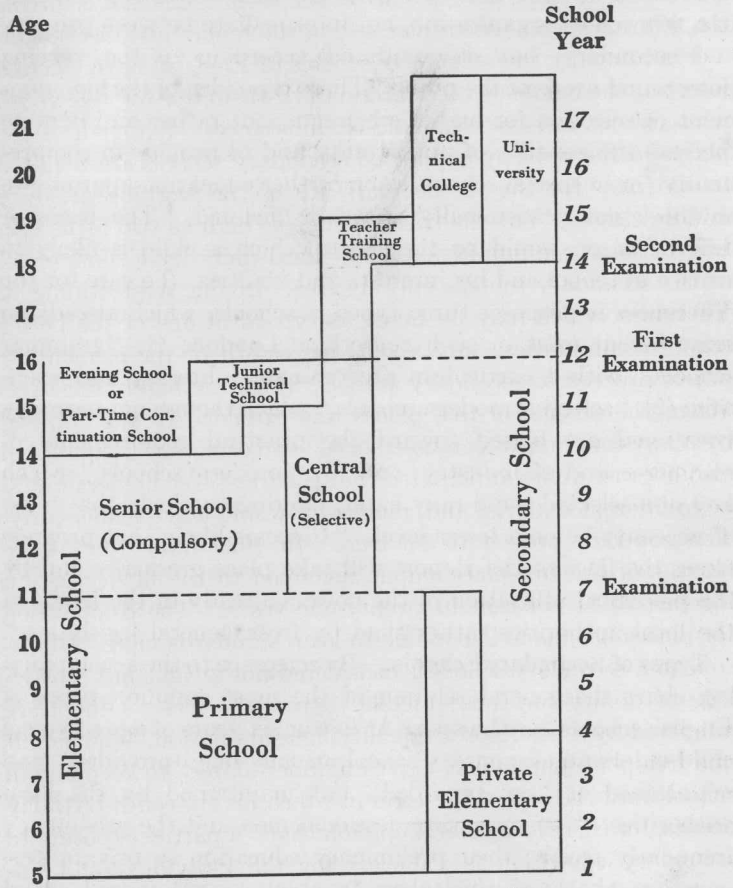

CHART 1. THE ENGLISH SCHOOL SYSTEM.

schools to the age of fourteen. Concerning the upper years of elementary education the Minister is quoted to have said that in his opinion "for general cultural purposes" no education is being

[1] See page 21.