

# SUPERVISION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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## PREFACE

*Supervision in the Secondary School* is an attempt to formulate, interpret, and apply to the problems of secondary-school supervision a democratic philosophy of education. The authors envisage the primary task of a supervisor to be that of encouraging and assisting his teachers to organize the details of teaching in harmony with the larger purposes of the secondary school. This carries with it as a corollary promoting the growth of a teacher's personality and enhancing the dignity of the teaching activity itself.

The ultimate concern of every school is, of course, the pupil. His welfare and the stimulation of his growth and development in the direction of a worthy adulthood constitute both the test and the chief justification of administrative organization and supervisory methods and techniques. Educational theory is barren and technical proficiency is as sour wine unless the pupil by virtue of these efforts grows in wisdom and understanding and enters progressively into socially meaningful relationships with his fellows.

It is for this reason that the authors stress the implications of democratic supervision for teacher growth and the understanding and guidance of pupils. Much has been written in recent years describing different types of supervisory organization. Manuals and compendia of existing procedure are not wanting. While recognizing the necessity for deriving specific help from existing practice (and indeed advocating its use at appropriate times), the authors believe there is need for a philosophy of supervision that will give perspective to the practical details of teaching. It is not intended, however, to ignore the administrative aspects of supervision. In Part IV and in other sections of the book

these problems are approached from the same fundamental point of view.

It is hoped that the book will stimulate the reader in formulating for himself a consistent body of theory and practice. Accordingly, Part I deals with the definition of the supervisor's relation to his teachers. Certain dominant conceptions of this relation, as exemplified in practice, are examined and a positive statement of a democratic conception is formulated with its implications in supervisor-teacher relationships. In Part II the democratic point of view is applied to the solution of practical problems in supervision, such as lesson planning, rating a teacher's worth, visitation and conference, and curriculum construction. A third phase of the supervisor's responsibility relates to the guiding and directing of pupil growth. This, of course, he can do only through instrumentalities other than direct contact. However, there rests upon him always the obligation to exercise his influence along lines that will stimulate the healthy and normal all-round development of boys and girls. He must assist his teachers to distinguish between the means and the ends of education and he must strive to establish coöperative efforts and clear understandings between teacher, pupil, and parent as individuals, and between the school and the home as institutions. Consequently, problems of teaching procedure, educational guidance, and the relations between school and home receive consideration in Part III. Finally, in Part IV, the problems involved in the general organization of supervision and the stimulation of teacher growth through the organization of the school receive consideration.

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## CHAPTER I

# THE BACKGROUND OF SECONDARY-SCHOOL SUPERVISION

Much has been written in recent years regarding the necessity of organizing secondary education with reference to the needs of boys and girls in an industrial civilization. In the literature of supervision, however, one will encounter surprisingly little emphasis upon the tentative and experimental nature of teaching which this period of transition obviously implies. The supervisor's function is more commonly interpreted from the standpoint of the efficient administration of details and the meticulous scrutiny of a teacher's performance in the light of objective and scientific criteria. Important as this is, it represents only a portion of the supervisor's total responsibility.

May we therefore outline briefly, as an introduction to the chapters that follow, some changes in contemporary living which we believe should constitute the background of supervision.

From one point of view we may say that the difference between the traditional and the modern school consists in the seriousness with which each conceives its function. The conventional school acts as a supplementary agency, leaving to the home and community major responsibility for organizing and directing the unifying and integrative influences that bear upon the child. To these influences it adds a training chiefly intellectual in character and designed primarily to prepare for adult life. The modern school, on the other hand, is steadily assuming responsi-

bility for educating the "whole" child and conceives its function to be that of an interpretive and orientating agency in a rapidly changing civilization.

This new point of view regarding the purpose of the school derives in large measure from the fact that an institution which served fairly well the needs of a rural and an agricultural economy is inadequate in a dominantly industrial civilization.

Take, for example, the part which the school plays today in equipping the individual to secure a new deal in life. Open roads to opportunity have characterized American life from its earliest beginnings, but there was little conscious relation of this phenomenon to schooling until the westward flow of population was first checked by the disappearance of free lands and then turned in the direction of the city. The handicapped Negro leaves the South today much as his disfranchised white brother a century or more ago migrated from the East to the open country of the West, but the Negro crowds into an already congested industrial center. This is typical of the drift of population generally. Census figures indicate that 22.2 per cent of our entire population live in states other than those in which they were born.

Mobility of population testifies to the lure of new opportunities. Ready means of transportation and communication — the railroad, the automobile, the aeroplane, rapid postal service, the telephone, the telegraph, and the radio — accentuate the dramatic appeal of the new. The lure of economic opportunity in distant fields was never so enticing as at present and never, apparently, so easy of realization. No one can tell, of course, how the percentage of individual failures compares with former times. The significant point is the existence of attractive opportunities for a fresh start in life. These clearly exist and are exaggerated in importance by rapid transformations in business and industry.

A change in methods of photography, for instance, revolutionized overnight the entire motion picture industry and the movietone has well-nigh rendered valueless all of the inventiveness and effort that went into the art of the silent film. What is true of the motion picture industry holds true of virtually every line of business. Students of industrial life tell us that never before were transformations of methods and processes so rapid as in the present and that in many respects we can say that the industrial revolution has just begun. We know not what changes lie before us, but of this there is no doubt: these changes are in the direction of an increasingly complex civilization.

These obvious facts have profound significance for education.

Most evident has been a lengthening of the period of general education. This is reflected in the revolutionary changes that are taking place in secondary-school enrollments. Thus, a high-school enrollment that in 1890 consisted of 1.6 per cent of the total elementary and secondary school population had increased to 15.2 per cent of this population in 1926. More startling is the growth of the secondary school in the past ten to fifteen years. In 1918, for example, the secondary school enrolled 28.29 per cent of our population between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. By 1926 this proportion had grown to 53.12 per cent. Thirty years ago the terms "common school" and "elementary school" were synonymous. Today we may appropriately designate the secondary school as the common school. Moreover, this secondary school is reaching upward to include the two years of the junior college, and in a short time we may expect the conclusion of a general education to imply graduation from a junior college. Those progressive communities that have already incorporated the junior college as an integral part of their public-school systems are merely shaping the structure of the school in

accordance with the principle (the principle which underlies compulsory school-attendance laws) that the American people are committed to universal education for all normal adolescent boys and girls.

Not quite so obvious, perhaps, is the transformation taking place in vocational education. The curriculum of the early academies, with its provision for training in subjects such as surveying, bookkeeping, principles of teaching, civil engineering, navigation, Blackstone's *Commentaries*, vocal music, architecture, and so forth, affords ample evidence of the early interest of the secondary school in the vocational preparation of its students. However, vocational education was once a simple matter of adding to or supplementing formal schooling with a specific vocational skill. There was in the beginning little interrelationship between general education and vocational or pre-vocational training.

Specific vocational training still persists in our schools, and probably there will continue to be children who, for practical reasons, must needs be introduced at a tender age to a specific trade. But this should be looked upon as a necessary evil, as vocational training, and not as a vocational education in harmony with the conditions of successful adjustment to modern industry.

Specific preparation for a trade was perhaps appropriate in a rural economy when processes were simple and when life outside of school laid broad preliminary foundations. G. Stanley Hall points out in his essay on *Boy Life in a Country Town* that as late as the middle of the nineteenth century a boy in a Massachusetts town picked up in his home and community activities the rudiments of some sixty trades. The fact that Jacks-of-all-trades once existed indicates, of course, that we did not have to penetrate far below the surface in order to find lines of identity connecting different vocational activities. But what is

the situation today? The census of 1920 reported some 20,000 vocations. It is impossible, if we would, to give specific vocational training for this number of occupations. Furthermore, in the light of what has been said regarding revolutionary changes in industrial operations, it is hazardous in the extreme to train young people for a narrow niche in society. An entire industry may flourish today, and tomorrow cast its skilled workers upon the industrial scrap heap.

It is for this reason that a number of schools are identifying at least pre-vocational preparation with the problem of general education and are endeavoring to lay the basis for later vocational choice and vocational preparation by equipping students with a knowledge of fundamental principles and processes that link up a wide variety of practical operations. In this way the school hopes to aid boys and girls in the development of a capacity for flexible adjustment to a changing situation.

Our industrial civilization requires that the school extend the period of general education and broaden its conception of preparation for a vocation. It also demands a constructive program with reference to certain disintegrating influences in contemporary living.

These disintegrating influences we discuss at some length in Chapter XVIII. They derive from the fact that the influences of our industrial civilization are transforming those institutions that have in the past functioned as the primary integrating and orienting influences in the lives of the young. In work and in play, in the serious and the lighter relationships of life, the two generations — parents and children — are finding it increasingly difficult to understand one another; and the traditional instruments, the home, the church, and the local community, which society once utilized to transmit the racial inheritance, no longer serve this end as effectively as they once did.

These conditions we believe should define the major objectives of the school. We cannot, of course, discuss at this point the details of the curriculum. We must content ourselves with indicating two or three large purposes that should give direction to the work of the school.

The first of these we have already mentioned in passing. The conventional school, it was said, has functioned as a supplementary agency. The modern school must serve as an interpretive agency. In conjunction with the home and community it should strive to orient the child in his world, to assist him to weave unity and purpose into his life. This is the outstanding obligation of the school. The aim is universal in its application although the means utilized will vary with local needs and conditions.

The so-called activity programs which characterize the work in progressive elementary schools grow out of this recognized need for orienting the child in his world. As against the traditional study of a textbook and the learning of the abstract material that prevailed a generation ago, these schools engage pupils upon meaningful units of work. For example, in reproducing typical phases of primitive life, the pupils gain insight into the significance of the importance of basic activities and relationships of people today. Moreover, these units of activity avoid the fragmentary character of traditional education within the classroom. A transportation unit, a study of wool, a comparison of country and town life, or running a grocery store, coördinate shop-work, art, music, sewing, cooking, and the like as well as the so-called tools of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children secure from school experiences of this character a first-hand contact with things and some conception of how man, the adventurer, has won for himself food, clothing, and shelter and the possibilities of rich living. Similarly, in later years, in the social studies, for example, pupils derive from further investigation additional insight

into life. As against an unrelated collection of facts they study such people as the Greeks or the Egyptians, or perhaps a period of history, such as Medieval Civilization or the Industrial Revolution, in order to secure vivid pictures of what people did and thought and felt under different circumstances. They thus come to appreciate that human beings have created significant values and ideals out of crude and forbidding conditions of existence and they at least prepare the ground in their own minds and characters for a realizing sense that human beings are constantly employed in weaving the conditions of much of the good and the evil which they share. They should not be misled into believing that progress is constant and inevitable, but they can be led to sense the implications of the fact that wherever progress exists there human beings are also found laboring to bring it about and to sustain its existence.

When the foundations are laid in the elementary school for numerous and varied interests, education in the period of adolescence can quite appropriately develop for the pupil the cultural and vocational implications of his special abilities and interests. This is quite different from saying that the subjects a pupil studies must carry him no farther than their practical bearings, and it is diametrically opposed to the traditional view that a liberal education must carefully avoid a speaking acquaintance with vocation. It means rather that when attention is centered upon utilizing the subjects of the secondary school to care for individual differences as between pupils, then conventional subjects, such as science, literature, history, and the like, will be viewed as plural subjects, each with interesting applications to pupils of varied interests and abilities.

"Orientation" and "interpretation" thus constitute the key words for education. The character of this orientation is relative to the age level of the pupil, but it should influence methods and procedures, and the organization

and selection of subject matter in all courses of study from kindergarten to college.

A second fundamental purpose of the school should be to develop effective tools of procedure. These are far more important products of education than information, although, of course, we cannot develop habits of study and inquiry from working with worth-while materials of learning without at the same time acquiring valuable information. Conventional education puts the cart before the horse. It centers first upon inculcating certain facts and points of view and only secondarily upon methods of procedure.

In this respect the modern school meets the wishes of neither the radical nor the conservative, for they both assume that education is identical with propaganda. They may differ as regards the conclusions they believe should be taught, but at least they are at one in their wish to impress upon the child predigested conclusions. A wiser practice recognizes that society never remains as it is, that change is inevitable and, in consequence, the greatest service the school can render the young is not so much to formulate conclusions for them as it is to train them in the use of the most adequately tested tools of inquiry and investigation. It seems to be increasingly evident that young people of today, despite what their elders may do, are prone to arrive at their own decisions. It is well, therefore, for the older generation to concentrate upon equipping the younger with well-tempered and tested tools of intellectual inquiry rather than with predigested conclusions.

A third essential in education is an ever-growing sensitiveness and responsiveness to others. The individual in this modern world tends more and more to attain to his individuality as a member of a group. Consequently it is incumbent upon the school to organize life within the school so as to develop a sympathetic and intelligent regulation of conduct with reference to others.



This social sensitiveness should operate both consciously and unconsciously. A school that encourages pupils to associate in joint learning activities, to participate in planning and conducting the extra-curricular life of pupils, to devise and carry out ways and means of helping the less fortunate, and causes children to pause frequently in the midst of contemplated action in order to trace out in imagination the far-reaching consequences of their action, moves in the direction we are urging.

What we propose is difficult to realize in a world that shifts its standards as rapidly as has ours, but fortunately teachers and pupils can build for the future more wisely than they know. For example, suppose we desire to develop in pupils the spirit of coöperation. Intellectually, and in the realm of habit and disposition, adults are hampered by individualistic notions and individualistic training. To them there is a genuine incompatibility between self-interest and group conformity. But, perhaps, if children's experiences from the kindergarten through high school are organized in such wise that in the actual business of living they recognize on one occasion the individual's right to differ from the group and under different circumstances the value of conformity to group judgment, they will themselves come to reconcile in their lives what is to their elders a genuine dilemma; and they will moreover mount to a level of coöperative development beyond the vision of their teachers.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the objectives that should determine teaching in the secondary school. Nevertheless significant progress will have been made in the direction of education for democratic living when the school concentrates upon the task of (1) creating conditions of work and play that will enable boys and girls to advance steadily in the direction of a "reasoned-out ideal of progress," (2) equipping them with methods and proce-