

A BRIEF COURSE
IN
THE TEACHING PROCESS

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PREFACE

THIS book is the direct outcome of experience in trying to help teachers grow in skill in the art of teaching and in power to appreciate the work in which they are engaged. In the following pages have been treated as concretely as possible the problems which the teacher faces day after day in the classroom. Theories of education have not been discussed at any great length, but rather those processes through which these fundamental principles find their expression in actual teaching.

Terminology which it is difficult for teachers to understand has been avoided. Although the results of studies in educational psychology and in experimental pedagogy have been included in the interpretation of the problems discussed, it has not been thought advantageous to discuss at any length any one of these investigations.

Many of the books which have been written for teachers have discussed theories of teaching method without indicating clearly the application of these principles in typical classroom exercises. In other volumes a single type of teaching has been emphasized to the exclusion of other equally valid methods of instruction. In this book each of the several typical methods of instruction has been treated, and the validity of the particular practice indicated in terms of the end to be accomplished, as well as the technique to be used. Since the technique of teaching method is not the only element in determining the efficiency of the teacher, there is included in this book a discussion of those other aspects of the teacher's work which determine the contribution which she makes to the education of the children with whom she works.

In the chapter on lesson plans are given a number of illustrations which conform to the types of exercises discussed earlier in the book. One of the greatest needs in working with teachers is met by this very definite provision for demonstrating the validity of the types of teaching discussed. The exercises given at the end of each chapter are intended to supplement the discussions of the book by calling for an interpretation of the thought there presented in terms of situations with which teachers are commonly familiar.

To Professors F. M. McMurry, Naomi Norsworthy, and L. D. Coffman, each of whom has read the manuscript, I am indebted for many valuable suggestions. To Miss Kirchwey of the Horace Mann School, Miss Steele and Miss Wright of the Speyer School, to Miss Tall, Supervisor of Grammar Grades in Baltimore County, Maryland, and to Dr. Lida B. Earhart of the New York City Schools, I am indebted for lesson plans. The outlines for the study of English, arithmetic, geography, and history which are given in the appendix are published with the permission of the authors and of the Teachers College Bureau of Publications.

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CHAPTER I

THE AIM OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION is worth just the difference it makes in the activities of the individual who has been educated. The question is not how many books did we compel the child to read; how much does he know of arithmetic, geography, history, music, art, and the like: but rather what use does he make of this knowledge; how is he different from the person who does not possess this information; and, still more important, are these differences in his activity desirable from the point of view of the group in which he lives. It is important, then, that we should consider, before we discuss the function of teacher in bringing about changes in children, the ends which it is desirable to attain.

The aim of education has been variously stated. In the popular mind the aim of education is usually interpreted in terms of knowledge, or the ability to make a living. The theorists have been more apt to define the purpose of education in terms of the development of the abilities of the individual, of growth, of culture, or of morality. It might be interesting to examine each of the aims which has been advanced in some detail. It may be as significant to note the element common to all.

It is safe to assume that the advocates of each statement of aim believed that their conception was broad enough to insure success for the individual educated in accordance with the particular ideal embodied in their statement of purpose. No aim would be at all acceptable which did not take account of the society in which the individual must work. The educa-

tion in a tribal society, which consisted in learning how to protect one's self and to provide for one's physical needs, the acquaintance with tribal ceremonies and tribal lore, quite as truly as our modern education, fitted the individual to get on in life. The individualistic point of view has been constantly emphasized. It has been a case of earning a living for one's self, of getting culture for the satisfaction that it might bring, of acquiring knowledge for the sake of the advancement which was thus made possible, of moral growth for the sake of individual salvation. More recently it has been common to state the aim of education in terms of social efficiency. It is the purpose of this discussion of aim to examine this concept in order to make clear its significance.

When society reaches that stage of development in which progress is definitely sought and planned for, the stage of conscious evolution, it is not enough that the individual be educated simply so that he may attain his own selfish ends. Each individual is a part of the organic whole, and in his functioning it is the good of the whole which is of paramount importance. The aim of education must, then, be broad enough to include both the welfare of the individual and the good of society. Is there any real opposition between these ends? If we think most of all of the welfare of the whole organism, must we sacrifice the interests of the constituent parts?

No one can do the most for the group of which he is a member who has not realized in his education the development of those abilities with which he is peculiarly endowed. The nurture of those abilities upon which society places a premium, and the inhibition of non-social tendencies, means greater opportunity for the exercise of whatever strength the individual possesses, greater individual growth and development, than would otherwise be possible. It is only through participation in social life that the highest individual development is possible, and it is true that "he who loseth his life" for the good of the group "shall find it." There is, then, no opposition

between that view of education which declares that the welfare of society is of paramount importance, and that which demands individual well being. If we are successful in obtaining the former, we must have secured the latter.

If the analysis of the relation of the individual to society is correct, we are justified in claiming that any adequate statement of the aim of education must point unmistakably to the idea of the common good. Education aims so to adjust the individual to the group that the welfare of society as a whole may be advanced. This adjustment can be brought about only through participation in social activities, and thus the aim is constantly realized in the process.

In our democratic society, which makes possible free education for all of its members, there can be no question of the right of society to demand that education aim to develop men and women who work for the common good. It is necessary, then, to analyze this aim of social efficiency in terms of our society. The equality of opportunity which we profess to offer is to be thought of in terms of possible service which may be rendered.

In any community the contribution to the general welfare which may be made by any one of its members is conditioned by the interests which the individual has in the general good. The unsocial individual, the one who seldom responds to the needs of the group, is out of sympathy with social problems, and contributes little to social welfare.

But it is not enough that the individual be interested in the common welfare. Interest may lead him to do that which is harmful rather than helpful, or it may be that his interest may have no result except to give him certain pleasurable emotions. There must be added to sympathy, knowledge. Interest or sympathy in the welfare of society may furnish the propelling force, but knowledge is necessary for effective action. The world is full of men and women with the best intentions who hinder rather than advance the common good.

Since each is responsible not only for his own conduct, but also for the welfare of the whole group, it is necessary that our education provide opportunity for growth in intelligence. Our schools have always emphasized this element in education. We have often defined the aim of education in terms of the development of citizenship. Usually the chief qualification of the citizen has been interpreted to be that knowledge which would enable him to exercise the right of suffrage with intelligence. We do well, however, to remember that intelligence must be exercised in all of the activities of life. Our education must strive constantly to develop men and women who will be *rational* at all times. But we may not forget that our schools have been so much concerned with the intellectual side of education that they have tended to neglect other elements which are equally significant from the standpoint of social welfare.

There is still another element which must be added, the habit of acting on behalf of the group. We all know people who know just what is demanded in a given social situation; they profess to be interested in the welfare of the group; but they never act. When their own private interests are involved they are quick to seize the opportunity for improving their condition; but in social matters they are inactive. It is in this particular, rather than in any other, that our schools fall short. We do much to arouse the sympathy of children in the general welfare; we give them the knowledge by which their action may be guided; but we give them little opportunity to form the habit of social service. This is due to the fact that we so often think of adult social activities as the only ones that are worth while, forgetting that for the child the important thing is social activity now and in his society, that the only way to prepare for adult social effectiveness is to secure social efficiency on the part of the child.

These questions still remain: how can we, through education, produce the individual who, because of social sympathy,

knowledge, and activity, will tend to advance the welfare of all; and what kinds of education meet the demands of the aim which we have set up.

(1) First of all, we must endeavor to produce the individual who is sound physically. Modern education recognizes the fact that a man's usefulness is conditioned by his bodily condition, and is also coming to find that physical activity is not without its effect on the mental development and life of the individual. There is, therefore, one large division of our work which we may call *physical education*.

(2) On the side of mental development, education consists in preserving and stimulating the child's interest in the materials and processes with which he may come in contact. Intellectual training aims to develop the man or woman who is mentally alert, active in investigation, and controlled by reason. It is to this *intellectual education* that our schools have devoted the larger part of their time. The school is the agency set aside by society for transmitting culture, and the teacher must always concern herself largely with the intellectual life of children.

(3) Our modern view of education is leading us to stress, along with physical and intellectual education, a kind of training which aims to develop the individual whose moral standards are positive rather than negative. *Moral-social education* should establish ideals of social service as well as standards of individual righteousness.

(4) Along with physical, moral-social, and intellectual-cultural education, there is need for that type of training which will enable each individual to do some particular work with a high degree of efficiency. This type of education we commonly call vocational. It is only recently that we have come to realize that it is not enough to train an individual with respect to general intelligence and morality, but that it is also just as fundamental that our education provide the training necessary for success in the particular calling which each individual is

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to enter. For the preparation of clergymen, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers, whose vocations require a maximum of intellectual achievement, it is true that we have long had our vocational schools. We are coming now to appreciate the fact that equality of opportunity demands that special training be given to those who are to enter the industries. Indeed, our vocational schools must multiply until there is training offered for each and every calling before we can claim to provide that training which is essential for social efficiency.

(5) Another problem is that of the training for leisure. In society as at present constituted, it is possible for many individuals, and it should ultimately be possible for all, to have a considerable amount of leisure time. The contribution of each individual in his special line of work, and his general interest in the whole community, will depend in a considerable degree upon the proper use of leisure time. Our education must, therefore, attempt to equip men with interests and ideals which make for the nobler enjoyments.

Keeping in mind the sympathetic, wise, active social individual, made so by the process of acquiring experience or making of adjustments, both physical and mental, we have yet to reduce our aim to the terms of schoolroom practice. What can a teacher hope to do in this hour, with this group of children to work with?

Habit
First of all the teacher can work for the formation of habits which are socially desirable and for the inhibition of those which are undesirable. "Education is for behavior, and habits are the stuff of which behavior consists."¹ The school may be a very important factor in the formation of habits in each of the fields of education mentioned above. If the school is organized on a rational social basis, it must continually present opportunities for actions which should become habitual, and the future efficiency of the learner depends upon gaining such control of much of the knowledge

¹ James, *Talks to Teachers*, p. 66.

which we teach that the response desired becomes habitual.⁴ The social virtues of promptness, regularity, helpfulness, industry, fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, cleanliness, both physical and mental, patriotism, and the like, should be made habitual in connection with the situations which demand their exercise. The physical habits acquired in childhood are of the utmost significance throughout life. Much of arithmetic, spelling, writing, geography, history, and even of literature and art, will be significant in proportion as we have reduced our knowledge to the automatic basis of habit. One cannot stop to reason everything out; life is too short. We gain time and energy for the higher activities of life in proportion as we reduce the responses which occur frequently to the basis of habits. In vocational schools one of the chief aims is the formation of habits of skill. Later we shall want to discuss in detail the methodology of habit formation.

Knowledge Every teacher recognizes that one of the ends which must be achieved by the school is knowledge. We shall not here enter into the discussion of the problem of what knowledge is of most worth, since for the teacher this choice is usually made and prescribed in the course of study. One cannot, however, refrain from suggesting that much that is taught would be eliminated, if we kept constantly in mind the end for which we strive. The following criteria, proposed by Professor Frank M. McMurry, will be suggestive from the standpoint of teaching, whether the teacher determines the curriculum or not.

"We hold to the following propositions in the rejection of subject matter.¹

"1. Whatever cannot be shown to have a plain relation to some real need of life, whether æsthetic, ethical, or utilitarian in the narrower sense, must be dropped.

"2. Whatever is not reasonably within the child's comprehension.

¹ F. M. McMurry, "Advisable Omissions from the Elementary Curriculum," *Ed. Rev.*, May, 1904.

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“3. Whatever is unlikely to appeal to his interest; unless it is positively demanded for the first very weighty reason.

“4. Whatever topics and details are so isolated or irrelevant that they fail to be a part of any series or chain of ideas, and therefore fail to be necessary for the appreciation of any large point. This standard, however, not to apply to the three R's and spelling.”

These criteria indicate clearly that knowledge can never be in itself an end of teaching. It is not that the child may have knowledge merely, but that he shall have knowledge which will function. This knowledge which we seek to have the child master will concern his physical life, his social relationships, his vocation; and in each field the knowledge he possesses will limit his intellectual activity.

The school must keep alive, or, in some cases, awaken those interests which are socially desirable. It is not enough that habits have been formed and knowledge acquired. Much of the usefulness of the individual after he leaves school will depend on his interests which lead him to acquire new knowledge, or to attempt some new activity. It has sometimes been asserted that the school, as at present organized, tends to kill rather than to preserve those interests which are common to little children. It is probable that the passing interests in things due to curiosity must disappear, regardless of the education which we give; but it is a poor sort of education which leaves the child without abiding interests which will help him not only in making a living, but also in enjoying his life. Here, as elsewhere in education, we may be satisfied with the result only when we get the corresponding action. That child has an interest in good literature who reads good literature. We can be sure that the boy is interested in natural phenomena when he is willing to spend his leisure time finding out more about nature's ways. The only test that we have of an abiding interest in the welfare of others is the fact that the child is now active on behalf of others. In like manner are we to