

OXFORD

the demands of liberal education

Meira Levinson

The Demands of Liberal Education

MEIRA LEVINSON

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires Cape Town
Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi
Kolkata Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
Paris São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw
and associated companies in Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Meira Levinson 1999

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 1999

First published in paperback 2002

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organisation. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquiror

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Levinson, Meira.

The demands of liberal education/Meira Levinson.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

1. Citizenship—Study and teaching. 2. Liberalism. 3. Autonomy
(Psychology). 4. Education—Aims and objectives. 5. Education and
state. I. title.

LC1091.L38 1999 370.11'2—dc21 99-24528

ISBN 0-19-829544-8 (Hbk)

ISBN 0-19-925044-8 (Pbk)

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by

Cambrian Typesetters, Frimley, Surrey

Printed in Great Britain

on acid-free paper by

Bookcraft Limited,

Medsomer Norton, Somerset

THE DEMANDS OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

*To my parents, Cynthia and Sanford Levinson,
and in memory of Oded Shur,
all liberal teachers in the truest sense*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great number of people and institutions have helped me with this book. It is my pleasure to thank them here.

I start with Nuffield College, Oxford, which provided unsurpassed academic, financial, and social support for three crucial years. I thank the College for the Funded Studentship in Politics, as well as for the private office space that should be the right of all graduate students everywhere. Within Nuffield, the Political Theory Workshop proved a challenging testing ground for early drafts of Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Many thanks especially to Marc Stears, Stuart White, Christopher Lake, Daniel Attas, Selina Chen, Robert van der Veen, and Cécile Fabre, as well as the other members of the Workshop, for their comments and criticisms. Marc Stears and Stuart White deserve particular thanks for hashing out many of the ideas in this book virtually *ad nauseam*; I hope they recognize in these pages the influence they have had, and will forgive me for those sections where I have unwisely ignored their advice. I also wish to thank Byron Shafer, John Darwin, Randall Hansen, Kurt Strovink, Antonia Taddei, Heather Bell, and Matthew Clayton for productive conversations about individual chapters or ideas.

Three people at Nuffield were especially influential in the development of this book. Andrew Hurrell provided invaluable advice about Chapters 1–4 and helped to shape my thinking about education in general. Robert Bickers was astoundingly generous with his time and friendship, serving as a sounding board for initial ideas, reading and commenting on each chapter as it was written, and in some cases overseeing the transformation of chapters into final drafts and conference presentations. David Miller earns my enduring gratitude for being an ideal D.Phil. supervisor, as well as now a good friend. Depending on my progress, he was at different times cajoling, firm, encouraging, stern, indulgent, pragmatic, sympathetic—and always supportive. I never doubted that he expected me to write something worthwhile, even when I didn't feel up to the task. He was also a thoughtful and extremely careful critic; this book would be far poorer without his insights.

Outside of Nuffield, my critics and interlocutors have been similarly numerous. Jerry Cohen, Terry McLaughlin, Tamar Barkay, Daniel

Markovits, Stephen Macedo, Eamonn Callan, Harry Brighouse, Jim Sleeper, Jill Rothenberg, and two anonymous reviewers all read the entire manuscript at least once, and in some cases multiple times. Their comments and criticisms were unfailingly helpful. To thank each one properly here would require an Acknowledgements section longer than the Introduction; I hope simply that they can see their influence throughout the book. David Lyons also read the manuscript and helpfully introduced me to the publishing world. Dominic Byatt has been a thoughtful and responsive editor, and Amanda Watkins, his assistant editor, has been unfailingly efficient and helpful. I look forward to continuing to work with both of them. Amy Gutmann, Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Geraint Perry, Kevin Stack, Ajume Hassan Wingo, John White, Patricia White, Andrew Weale, and three anonymous reviewers for the *British Journal of Political Science* provided helpful discussions of or comments on drafts of earlier chapters of this book. I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to reprint material from 'Liberalism versus Democracy? Schooling Private Citizens in the Public Square', *British Journal of Political Science*, 27, (1997): 333–60, which appears here in revised form as Chapter 4. Many thanks to the editors of the *Oxford Review of Education*, as well, for permission to reprint sections of 'Liberalism, Pluralism, and Political Education: Paradox or Paradigm?' *Oxford Review of Education*, 25/1 & 2 (March–June 1999), 39–58. Jan Anderson, librarian for the Texas Education Agency, flooded me with information on educational policy whenever I asked—including while the library was in the midst of moving. The Nuffield College Library provided further crucial sources. In addition, I benefited from having the opportunity to present my work in seminars and conferences at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Manchester University, Cambridge University, the University of London, Wolfson College (Oxford), All Souls College, University College (Oxford), the Political Studies Association Annual Meeting, ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, and the Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB). The PESGB also provided ongoing support for my induction into the philosophy of education, as well as providing financial support for my travel to conferences. I am also grateful to the Overseas Research Scheme and the Henry Fellowship for substantial financial support while I was working on this manuscript. Given all the help that I have received, it should go without saying that I alone am culpable for the errors that remain.

For the past three years, I have taught in the Atlanta Public Schools in Atlanta, Georgia. I would like to thank my principal, Alicia Oden, and the rest of the faculty and staff at Walden Middle School for keeping me focused on the more practical aspects of education provision even while I was trying to revise this book. Shirley Smith has been especially supportive of my

efforts to finish this book while teaching. Although my students certainly did not help me complete this book in a timely manner, they did continually remind me about why children's education is so important, and they continue to give a fulfilling purpose to both my writing and my teaching.

Finally, I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to four people who have been in my life for a long time, and who have shaped my thinking beyond compare. I have laughed with my parents, Cynthia and Sanford Levinson, many times about the extent to which my work represents the marriage of their two vocations, educational planning and legal theory. It is possible that I ended up adopting their interests so strongly because I have never been sufficiently rebellious—an irony, as Jim Sleeper has pointed out, that becomes especially apparent in Chapter 2. I suspect, however, that I have done so far more because of the incomparable example they have set of the value of living one's life via learning, teaching, helping others, and taking responsibility for reflecting on one's beliefs and for realizing one's principles. My parents pursue these ideals through different means but both have guided me unswervingly and with love, for which I am profoundly grateful. Both of my parents have also read every word of this book—often multiple times in multiple drafts—as well as supported its completion in many other ways essential for my intellectual, psychological, and physical well-being. Without their searching comments and unwavering support this would be a profoundly different and far worse book. I am pleased to be able to dedicate this book to them.

I further delight in following family tradition by acknowledging my sister, Rachel Levinson, as an altogether splendid human being. She has always been ready with words of encouragement when I have been frustrated by teaching or writing or both, and she continues to model the autonomous yet grounded life to which I think we should all aspire. I look forward to acknowledging Rachel and her husband, Aaron Campbell, again in the years to come.

Last but certainly not least, my husband, Marc Lipsitch, has had to live with me and this book more closely than anyone else, and has provided encouragement and help at every turn. Although he has never read the manuscript straight through (I think because of fear of what he might find), his influence can be felt in every chapter, and especially on every page of the Introduction. The fact that this book exists at all is also in large part due to his ongoing support. In deference to his taste for short acknowledgements, I will say no more than that he has been central to making my time in New Haven, Oxford, and Atlanta a joy; I look forward to many more years of joy with him to come.

M. L. L.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. Autonomy and the foundations of contemporary liberalism	9
2. The development of autonomy	36
3. Modifying the liberal educational ideal	64
4. Culture, choice, and citizenship: schooling private citizens in the public square	100
5. Making sense of it all: transforming political theory into educational policy	132
Notes	171
Bibliography	213
Index	229

Introduction

‘The more control a state acquires and exercises over education, the greater the potential for tyranny in that state.’

‘Respecting diversity in a liberal society in part means valuing parents’ freedom to educate their children as they wish.’

‘Schools provide a service or product to parent and student consumers. As with any business, therefore, schools should be responsive to their consumers’ preferences and directly accountable to them.’

These statements all have some intuitive appeal. They all exercise substantial sway over education policy and provision in many countries around the world: the United States and Great Britain in particular; Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, and New Zealand (among other countries) to a lesser but still significant extent. They are so influential, in part, because they apparently stem from a commitment to individual liberty, which is one of the foundational commitments that hold together each of the above countries and their citizens. Whether consciously or not, citizens of liberal states (such as those mentioned above) favor educational policies that seem to protect individual liberty.

From the perspective of liberalism, however, the above statements are wrong. Furthermore, they are wrong in ways that are harmful to the maintenance of liberty itself, and thus also to the maintenance of liberal states. Although these claims do support some individuals’ liberty—namely, parents’ liberty to control their children’s education—they do not value individual liberty as such. Instead, they disvalue the liberty of most future citizens: namely, the liberty of all children and of the adults they will grow into. As a result, as I shall argue in this book, they are illiberal. Although these claims may appeal to our common sense as educators, political theorists, policy makers, policy analysts, philosophers, parents, and/or citizens, none of these common-sense claims holds up under careful scrutiny. Each derives from some combination of unexamined cultural and historical biases, fuzzy thinking, careless policy analysis, political theorizing that ignores children, and/or indifference to the influence of certain forms of political, educational, and familial structures on children’s development. This book aims to counter these sources of ‘common sense’, and to substitute in their place a carefully reasoned,

theoretically and empirically sensitive liberal political policy of children's education provision.

Such a book is necessary for a number of reasons. To begin with, education theory, policy, and praxis are all undergoing increasing scrutiny and criticism in North America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Schools and educators are being challenged to justify their aims and effectiveness, to reorient to a market-driven conception of education, to address and implement new or revised national curricula, to set higher standards, to reconceive in some cases the relationship between state and private schools, and so forth. Insofar as the states in which these debates are taking place are (or believe themselves to be) liberal democracies, citizens' conceptions of the nature and practice of liberalism play an important role in shaping the political and educational debate. It is thus important that both liberalism itself and liberalism's relationship to education be understood correctly.

The statements that opened this introduction exemplify how liberal politics currently influence education reform. Consider the third statement: 'Schools provide a service or product to parent and student consumers. As with any business, therefore, schools should be responsive to their consumers' preferences and directly accountable to them.' As I mentioned above, this claim makes some intuitive sense. It also exercises enormous influence over education reform initiatives in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere. State schools are being actively encouraged, if not forced, to market themselves to parents, students, business leaders, and other community members in order to get sufficient 'business' to stay open. Schools must develop mission statements and publish informational brochures, submit to widely publicized rankings (league tables in the UK; newspaper reports which fashion themselves as the *Consumer Reports* of the education business in the US), and in some cases even advertise on billboards in order to attract students and maintain funding. The provision of education is thus becoming increasingly market-oriented. This growing influence of market-based ideas in education results, I suggest, from the growing importance of the market in liberal thought more generally. In many countries, especially (again) the United States and Britain, the association between liberalism and capitalism has been embraced with renewed vigor in recent years. The fall of the Iron Curtain, for example, has generally been taken to symbolize the triumph of free markets over centralized planning, rather than the triumph of political freedom over political repression. Liberalism's ascendancy is thus also identified with market values rather than political or social values. Likewise, many liberal freedoms and institutions are defended these days on economic grounds ('good for business') rather than on civic or social grounds. As liberal politics goes, I

suggest, so goes education reform. As a result of liberalism's new market-oriented status, schools have also been remade in a capitalist, market-oriented image.

A second example of the influence of liberal political reform on education can be found in the relatively recent politics of diversity and multiculturalism. Diversity politics have both challenged and taken root within liberal thought and practice in the past two decades. As a result, substantial changes have taken place in liberal democracies. Protection of, support for, and accommodation of diversity and pluralism have overshadowed old goals of assimilation; the assertion and realization of sectarian identities (racial, religious, ethnic, socio-economic, gendered, or otherwise) play an ever-increasing role in civic and social discourse. Again as a result, citizens' conceptions about who should provide what kind of education to whose children have taken on increasingly diversity-oriented and sectarian overtones. For instance, although local control over schools has always been substantial in America, state and federal control were also acknowledged to have their place. Now, more and more parents are coming to see *any* state-sponsored regulation over education as discredited because of the newly elevated demands of pluralism and diversity. This is true even among parents who self-consciously reject 'liberalism' or 'liberal ideology' as such: for example, some homeschoolers and Afrocentrists. In liberal states, even illiberal citizens base their claims about education on liberal values.

These two examples demonstrate that citizens (parents, academics, policy makers, voters, etc.) are already deciding education policy on the basis of their beliefs about liberal principles. Because they (and we) are relying on 'common sense' intuitions about liberalism rather than on a coherent, well-articulated theory of liberal education provision, however, many of the policies that are being established and implemented (such as the ones described above) are actually illiberal. It is therefore essential to develop a carefully conceived, coherent liberal political theory of children's education. And although a few political theorists and philosophers of education have written thoughtfully about liberalism and education in recent years,¹ there has been no full, book-length treatment that goes beyond civic education into the broader range of questions about both the theoretical and the practical relationship between liberalism and education. There is thus an urgent practical need to examine and explain how liberal principles should be applied to educational practice.

There are also strong theoretical reasons to examine the interplay between liberal political theory and education. To begin with, contrary to the assertions made by the philosopher of education R. S. Peters,² the aims of education are not internal to or given by the concept of 'education' itself. In other words, to know that one's aim is 'to educate' is not enough to give

purpose to one's actions; rather, one must also know *to what end(s)* one is educating, and these ends cannot be given by the concept of education itself. Thus, education can function as a substantive, directed practice only if it is embedded within a broader practice or set of goals—one such set of goals being the liberal political principles that already (more or less) guide (more or less) liberal states. Second, within liberal states, liberal political theory is properly applied not only to the aims but also to the structure and administration of educational institutions. This is because all such decisions have political aspects. For example, independent of education's particular curricular aims, many egalitarian political theories would forbid the existence of elite private schools on grounds of equality of opportunity or resources. Libertarians, on the other hand, presumably would not forbid such disparities between elite private and common state schools; if anything, libertarians view state schools themselves as illegitimate. Opposing political theories and principles would also resolve in very different ways questions about optimal distribution of scarce educational resources, school desegregation measures, school choice, and the ideal composition and power of school governing bodies. Since political principles are inevitably relevant to determining the aims, structure, and administration of education provision, the politics of education provision in a liberal state should be guided by liberal principles.

Just as liberal political theory has important ramifications for the aims, structure, and content of education, so education has important ramifications for liberalism in both theory and practice. Liberal theory requires that adult citizens have a wide range of capacities and opportunities, many of which can be achieved primarily by means of education during childhood. While there is disagreement about exactly which abilities citizens should possess—examples include the capacity for democratic citizenship (embraced most explicitly by John Rawls and almost all liberals), the capacity for respecting people who are very different from oneself (embraced by many liberal theorists but rejected by some³), and the capacity for autonomy (embraced by Joseph Raz and a few other theorists)—all contemporary liberal theories require that adults have some opportunities and capacities provided for by education. Thus, liberals must integrate a conception of education into their political theory in order to ensure that liberal educational aims can be achieved in a manner that is theoretically consonant with liberal political aims as a whole. Furthermore, on an even more practical level, citizens' possession and exhibition of these capacities are essential to the very preservation of the liberal state. As I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, a liberal state can thrive (indeed, can survive) only if a large portion of its members are tolerant of each other, value the preservation of liberal freedoms, and exhibit liberal democratic civic virtues. Individuals most

reliably develop these characteristics, I will argue throughout the book, by participating as children in a particular system of state-regulated education. As a result, liberal institutions can be maintained and liberal goals achieved in practice only if certain defined educational aims and practices can be achieved. In this respect, education is not simply one more public policy issue (like health care or environmentalism) to which to apply liberal principles. Rather, education lies at the heart of the liberal project; it is upon the realization of liberal educational goals that the success of liberalism itself depends.

There are thus two reasons that it is important for liberalism to address head-on the problem of educating future citizens. First, insofar as liberal political principles have implications for how education should be structured and what its aims should be, these implications should be spelled out. From a liberal perspective, modern education policy should be led by liberal theory, not vice versa. Thus, liberals should be deeply engaged in asking (and answering) such questions as: What should the aim(s) of education be? Do parents have the right to determine the content of their children's education? Is liberal education coterminous with education in civic virtues? Or finally, is there a liberal case for or against re-establishing a market in education? Second, it is important for liberals to come to terms with the constraints that education can impose on the achievement of liberal aims. Liberalism must become aware of and responsive to the pedagogical and political boundaries within which the liberal educational project can operate, for they have implications for liberalism's success in general. As I will discuss in the following chapters, children's education reveals a number of internal tensions within liberalism that are either hidden or seemingly irrelevant in relation to adults. Although liberal theory has a fairly clear vision of the relationship between the state and the adult individual (which I address in Chapter 1), this vision will be thrown into question when we consider in greater depth the relation between the state and the *formation* of the individual. It is therefore important to develop a theory of contemporary liberal education, both to guide liberal thinkers and citizens in their responses to various educational proposals (such as school choice or parent control), and to guide the future development of liberal theory so that it better takes into account educational issues and concerns.

Having sketched out in a preliminary fashion the reasons that a liberal theory of education is needed, I must now make clear exactly the ways in which this book does and does not satisfy this need: i.e., I must delineate the scope and aims of this book. As I said above, my aim is to develop a theory of children's education provision in line with contemporary liberal political principles—or in other words, to apply contemporary liberal political theory

to the problem of determining the aims, content, and institutional structures of children's education. All of these terms require definition and clarification.

To begin with, my aim is not to justify liberalism itself. Although I discuss various justifications for liberal principles and policies in Chapter 1, and settle on the value of autonomy as motivating liberal concerns, I do not try to argue that all readers should be liberals, or that all readers value autonomy in the way that liberalism does. Contemporary liberalism does see its own legitimacy as depending upon the unanimous consent of potential citizens, usually under a variety of hypothetical conditions. I thus must (and do) argue that when understood in a certain way, state valuation of autonomy will draw the greatest possible number and range of people to affirm liberal principles and institutions. I do not believe or argue, however, that *all* people will affirm liberal principles based on the value of autonomy. Nor do I present any independent argument for the value of autonomy. Rather, I simply argue that liberal principles depend for their justification on an appeal to the value of individual autonomy, and that this justification must also therefore guide the development of a liberal theory of education. This project takes liberalism's value or significance as a given, and works to construct and justify a theory of education within that context. It does not try to provide an independent justification for liberal theory or principles.

In order to take liberalism as a given, I must clarify what I take 'liberalism' itself to refer to. When I use the terms 'liberalism', 'contemporary liberalism', or 'contemporary liberal theory', I mean to refer to Anglo-American liberal thought of the past 150, and especially the past thirty, years. I emphasize the past three decades because it was in 1971 that John Rawls published his magisterial *A Theory of Justice* and fundamentally transformed the face of subsequent political theory, especially liberal political theory. I am most interested in (and inspired by) liberal thought that follows this transformation. In practice, this means that the liberalism I describe has a more 'human' face than some readers might expect. Liberalism is not solely about rights, according to this analysis; it is also about obligations, and about ensuring that as many individuals as possible have the ability to determine and make use of the freedoms provided them by a liberal state. To place this in historical context, I focus upon the tradition of liberal thought represented by J. S. Mill, Rawls, and Joseph Raz, rather than that of Thomas Hobbes, F. A. Hayek, or Herbert Spencer. Chapter 1 further clarifies the characteristics of contemporary liberalism that I believe to be significant and definitive of contemporary liberal thought.

One common characteristic of most contemporary liberal theories is that they are limited to modern, Western, industrialized democracies. Liberals

are often wary of ‘imposing’ liberalism on illiberal countries, and especially upon cultures which exhibit traditional but non-tyrannical ways of life. For the purposes of this book, I remain agnostic about whether liberalism’s application *should* be limited in this way, but I do follow precedent in limiting my own theory to the context of modern, industrialized, democratic countries which are predominantly, although imperfectly, liberal. This is not to say that I exempt illiberal *cultures* within the liberal state from the conclusions of my book. I explain in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 why children who are raised in illiberal cultures within liberal states must none the less be subject to a liberal education. But I do not address the application of these principles to non-liberal, non-industrialized, or anti-democratic countries.

Next, by ‘children’, I mean people who are still legally minors—people, in other words, who are under 16 or 18 years old. Insofar as this book is about the application of liberal theory to children’s education in particular, therefore, it has nothing to say about higher education. Despite the undeniable importance of political questions about university-level education, technical training programs, and adult education, I do not address them here.

One might ask, of course, why I focus on schooling at all. There is a profound difference between *education* in general and *schooling* in particular, in that the latter represents only one small part of the former. Children learn from their parents, their relatives, their peers, television, other forms of mass media, their coaches, billboards, magazine advertisements, their experiences of caring for a pet; in other words, they learn from and are educated by life. Thus, a book that aims at clarifying the relationship between liberal principles and children’s education must justify focusing on formal education’s (i.e. schooling’s) role in particular. I do this in Chapter 2, in which I argue that the institutional and particularly communal structure of a school is ideally suited to realizing liberalism’s goals for and obligations toward children: namely, to help them develop their capacities for autonomy. Thus in this book, the institution of the school is *derived from* the liberal political theory developed in Chapters 1 and 2, rather than being taken as a given, or as being tantamount to the process of education itself. When I use the term ‘education’ in this book, therefore, I will primarily mean to refer to formal schooling, because I will have shown that a liberal theory of children’s education requires the construction of liberal schools. But I also acknowledge the important role of informal education, such as that mediated by families, peers, communities, and cultures, at various points in Chapters 2, 3, and 5. Ultimately, therefore, I attempt a balancing act in this book. Informal and non-school-based education play a significant role in my theory. But I argue even more strongly that to apply contemporary liberal political theory to the problem of determining the

aims, content, and institutional structures of children's education is in large part to apply liberal political theory to the problem of determining the aims, content, and structures of children's schooling. This is what I try to accomplish in this book.

As I mentioned above, although there are a number of articles (and a few good books) about liberal *civic* education, there is a tremendous gap in the literature regarding the relationship between contemporary liberal political theory and education policy more generally. This is less true for the concept of democratic education. In addition to John Dewey's classic *Democracy and Education* and Amy Gutmann's influential *Democratic Education*, other books include James Tarrant's *Democracy and Education* and David Steiner's *Rethinking Democratic Education*.⁴ These works are significant in their own right, but they cannot and should not be read as proxies for works on liberal education. Just as democratic and liberal theory are not the same, although they are related, neither are democratic and liberal education equivalent enterprises. Therefore, as I discuss at points in Chapters 4 and 5, a theory of democratic education, cannot and should not stand in for a theory of liberal education.

Finally, one can construct only so much in a single work, especially if one tries seriously, as I do, to integrate empirical data into one's educational and liberal theory. As I argued above, liberal theory must be responsive to practical, empirical educational concerns and outcomes if it is to be tenable—just as educational theory and goals must be responsive to practical political concerns and outcomes. In order to construct an intelligent conception of liberal education, therefore, it is necessary to ground philosophical claims about education's ideal aims, distributions of control, and institutional structures within a practical framework of political and educational research. In this book, I focus on questions concerning the aims of liberal education, the structure of liberal education provision, levels of parent involvement, and the character of the school as a community, rather than on the more microscopic level of teaching techniques, classroom practice, the administrative structure of a particular school, and so forth. I take this approach because it makes sense to figure out the broad structures of education provision before one addresses the specific techniques and practices that should be used within the school itself. I intend that the book itself will justify these observations.