

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

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PREFACE

The development of a democratic system of public secondary education in the United States represents one of the major cultural movements of modern times. The movement is without parallel. As a recent English writer aptly puts it, America is the first country to try to educate the democracy who rule her.

The movement has been so much a part of ourselves, and its unfoldment has been so phenomenal, that we have scarcely been aware of its character and its implications, and yet it owes its inception and development to anything but chance. The democratic American secondary school system is more than anything else the expression of the genius and the aspirations of a new world order—a world order based upon the recognition of the dignity and worth of every man.

The dominant note in our civilization has always been humanistic rather than material. The early New England settler, although beset by every material hazard, was apprehensive lest learning be buried in the graves of the fathers. Two centuries later, on the eve of the industrial revolution, his descendants were distressed by the thought that learning in the new commonwealth might remain the prerogative of the select few. After a century of unprecedented material progress, we find the same element in our population busily engaged in extending the benefits of a democratic system of secondary education to the youth of all the people. The task is not yet complete, but of its ultimate issue there can be no doubt.

In this volume I have endeavored to trace the rise and development of the democratic American secondary school system, and to characterize and interpret its contemporary functioning. In so doing, I have been actuated by the conviction that the professional workers in the democratic secondary school should be much more than teachers of subject matter and routine ad-

ministrators. They should be educators in the truest sense of the term. To this end, they need, among other things, a comprehensive understanding and a deep appreciation of the institution—its setting, its purposes, and the problems which confront it.

The general calibre of the treatise has been in a large measure determined by another conviction engendered by some fifteen years of experience in teaching courses in secondary education—the conviction that textbooks which exploit facile generalization are of little use. Indoctrinization and propaganda have yet to produce the first master in any field. There is no royal road to the functional understanding and genuine appreciation of any situation. These come only through the assimilation of real experience. Fortunately, the average college student is capable of doing much more thinking than we give him credit for, provided the motive and the materials are available. I have, therefore, at the risk of being accused of lack of originality, made large use of quantitative and factual materials, and I offer no apology for it. The careful reader will discover that these are without exception food for thought.

The field of secondary education is so vast that rigid selection becomes imperative in a treatise of this kind. I have endeavored to single out and emphasize those aspects of the situation which are of most immediate concern to the teacher—actual and prospective. In keeping with this criterion, administrative problems and vocational education have been touched upon only incidentally. Changing conceptions and practices in curriculum-making and teaching, on the other hand, have been accorded much emphasis. They constitute pivotal issues in modern secondary education, and are of vital concern to every teacher.

The scope of the discussion embraces the entire secondary period, beginning with the junior high school and ending with the junior college. The period as such is regarded as an organic educational unit with specific purposes of its own. It is assumed, further, that the educational regimen corresponding to this

period will gradually take the form of two cycles—a four-year junior high school, and a four-year senior high school.

Practically all the content embodied in the treatise has been used in classes in secondary education with some three thousand students.

Needless to say, I am greatly indebted to outstanding authorities in the field of education. To Charles H. Judd I owe a fundamentally scientific point of view. John Dewey and Ernest Carroll Moore have profoundly influenced my philosophical outlook. Henry C. Morrison, more than any one else, has shaped my conception of secondary education. Dean W. W. Kemp of the School of Education of the University of California and Dean Marvin L. Darsie of the Teachers College of the University of California at Los Angeles read the manuscript and offered valuable criticism and suggestions.

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INTRODUCTION

Textbooks in the field of secondary education are abundant but the tremendous expansion of secondary schools and the growth of the concept of secondary education seem to justify the frequent appearance of books in this field. The author of the present volume presents a comprehensive and careful survey of the whole field of secondary education. Conscious of the world-wide attempts to reorganize the select and aristocratic secondary school he has included an historical background of developments in representative European school systems as well as the developments which have been emphasized during the various periods or levels in our own country. His pictures of the changes occurring during the previous decade are very illuminating and should serve to supplement rather than to repeat the details usually included in history of education courses, a criticism frequently ascribed to other texts in secondary education. Also, in his selection of content the author has made another significant departure from the conventional textbook in this field, namely, in the attempt to show how the evolution of the democratic secondary school corresponded to changes in our economic, social, and political life. Phenomenal growth of interest in public secondary education represents but one aspect of the economic and cultural advance of the nation.

The volume will impress the reader with the all-inclusiveness of the present secondary program, especially so in the United States and increasingly so in countries like England and France. Democracy's schools have expanded beyond the accepted eight grades of the nineties to twelve, and even to fourteen grades; a narrowly prescribed program of subject matter has been superseded by multiple programs of courses which offer to the high school pupil contacts along nearly all of the important phases of modern social life; while the pupil has been

emancipated from the overpowering atmosphere of subservience and has come to occupy the focus of attention. The old, the formal education involved "fitting the individual into a given scheme of things"; its shibboleth was discipline; its justification was preparation for adult living. The new education offers a functional conception. Recognizing the pupil as raw material possessing latent capacities, its office is to guide this individual as he creates and shapes his own world.

In dealing with the scope and functions of secondary education, the author has brought to bear on the discussion, invaluable material of research which the last three years have given us—for example, the epoch-making work of Morrison. Likewise his sections on the high school pupil incorporate the latest and best studies. In both instances we are given excellent surveys of the worthwhile literature much of which has appeared subsequent to the publication of most of the textbooks in the field. The chapters on the curriculum and curriculum-making are among the best sources to be found which attempt to assemble, select, and analyze the great mass of current research on the curriculums of the three levels of secondary education.

In view of its comprehensive and up-to-date character, it seems certain that the book will prove a scholarly and valuable addition to the literature on secondary education.

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SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND—THE COLONIAL PERIOD

INTRODUCTORY

In tracing the historical development of secondary education in the United States, we shall find it convenient to center our discussion around three rather well-defined epochs: (1) The Colonial Period, (2) The Century from 1790 to 1890, and (3) The Period since 1890. Each of these epochs had its peculiar economic, social, and political conditions—conditions which went far toward determining the character and shaping the development of secondary education.

The colonial period, with its European antecedents and its simple and relatively aristocratic economic, social, and political life, went little beyond the transplantation of the Latin grammar school and the arts college. Only with the changing conditions of pre-Revolutionary decades were there signs of a new institution—the academy. The century from 1790 to 1890, characterized by strongly democratic and nationalistic trends and by vast and far-reaching economic and social changes, saw on the one hand the rapid spread and the gradual decline of the semi-private academy, and on the other the rise and development of the public high school. The period since 1890, with its increasing economic, social, and political complexity, and its phenomenal material prosperity, witnessed among other things a tremendous expansion and fundamental democratization of

the public high school and the inception of the movement for a functional reorganization of the whole system of education.

COLONIAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL SETTING

Little need be said regarding the economic, social, and political conditions of colonial America. Although complicated in many ways, life was simple and people lived close to nature. There were few skilled occupations. Most of the colonists were tillers of the soil and artisans. A limited number engaged in trade. The minister was the most highly trained member of the community. The machinery of government was anything but intricate, and the right of suffrage was greatly restricted. There was little wealth. Social distinction was not as marked as in the Old World. In the absence of adequate facilities for social intercommunication, social solidarity did not, during the earlier stages at least, extend far beyond the immediate community. And communities were small. By the close of the period there were only six cities with a population of 8,000 or more. The population of colonial America was always limited, amounting to about 250,000 in 1700, 1,370,000 in 1750, and less than 4,000,000 at the close of the period.

The outlook on life was severely religious, especially in the New England and the Middle colonies. In these regions at least, religion supplied the chief motive for education, and it went far toward shaping institutions and practices.

With respect to its major institutions, the earlier part of the colonial period was of course dominantly an era of transplantation. The immigrant brought with him the institutions to which he had gotten accustomed in the Old World. Among these were schools of various kinds. Before proceeding with our discussion of colonial education, it is necessary, therefore, that we take some account of European educational antecedents.

EUROPEAN ANTECEDENTS OF COLONIAL EDUCATION

At the time that America was being settled, formal humanistic secondary schools were rather common in England and other

European countries. They were in large part the successors of various types of mediaeval scholastic schools. In England they were generally known as *Grammar* or *Latin* schools. Their support came most commonly from private and ecclesiastic foundations and from Royal grants. In some cases they had been founded by incorporated towns, the support coming from such sources as lands, licenses, voluntary contributions, and tuition fees. The curriculum consisted mainly of Latin, Greek, and religious training and instruction. Attendance was limited largely to boys of the middle and upper classes, though promising boys from the lower classes were by no means excluded. Boys commonly entered at the age of seven or eight, presumably, though not always, after they had learned to read the vernacular. They remained from six to seven years. Upon the completion of the course those who wished to continue their education entered the university.

The European Renaissance university consisted generally of four divisions—the arts course, and the schools of medicine, law, and theology. The arts course supplied liberal training and prepared for the professional schools. The English universities consisted primarily of groups of colleges offering the arts course.

Elementary vernacular schools had also been quite generally established in the protestant countries of continental Europe at the time that America was being settled. They were as a rule parochial schools. In the main they had come in response to the insistence on the part of continental protestant leaders that each individual learn to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself. In England the Reformation had been largely political, and the clergy continued to act as official spiritual advisers. Hence there was less occasion for elementary vernacular schools. The separatist element, which adhered to the continental protestant point of view, constituted of course an exception, and insisted on elementary vernacular education for religious ends. Elementary vernacular education was, however, by no means unknown among the rank and file of the English. It was most

often provided through the medium of private instruction in the home and through *petty* or *dame* schools. To a limited extent it was also available in connection with grammar schools. Private reading, writing, and reckoning schools were likewise quite common.

It should be noted in passing that elementary education, in so far as it was provided at this time, was not definitely articulated with secondary education. Some training in the vernacular was essential for the pursuit of secondary studies, but this was often supplied in the home or by the grammar schools themselves, and did not call for a system of elementary education. The latter came into being for very different reasons. There were thus even at this early date, in embryonic form at least, two separate systems of education—one embracing secondary and higher education, and intended for a more or less select minority who were to serve as leaders in church and state, the other embracing elementary vernacular and practical education, and intended for the rank and file. This distinction became of course much more pronounced during succeeding centuries.

It should be noted that the secondary education of the seventeenth century did not have the same connotation as the secondary education of today. It was primarily a classical education for a relatively select group of boys between the ages of seven or eight and fourteen or fifteen. Today we look upon it increasingly as the education appropriate to young people between the ages of eleven or twelve and eighteen or nineteen.

EDUCATION IN COLONIAL AMERICA

The colonists in large measure transplanted the educational practices of the mother country to the New World and adapted them to their peculiar needs and points of view. The situation in colonial America was, however, greatly complicated by the fact that the early settlers, although the majority came from England, were anything but homogeneous from the standpoint of traditions, points of view, and aims. Ignoring minor differences, we find at least three well-defined groups—the New

England, the Middle, and the Southern—each with rather distinct traditions and attitudes toward education.

The New England colonies represented by far the most favorable conditions for education. The settlers were for the most part Puritans, with common traditions and a common outlook upon life. They were adherents to the Calvinistic wing of continental protestantism. As continental protestants they were committed to the principle of elementary vernacular education for religious ends. As Calvinists they looked upon state and church as closely identified, a fact which greatly facilitated state action in behalf of education. They were, moreover, a rather highly educated people, keenly conscious of the need of secondary and higher education for the training of leaders in church and state, and strongly apprehensive lest learning be buried in the graves of the fathers. Accordingly New England proved to be the cradle of the American public school system. Elementary and secondary education, at first left to the home and to voluntary endeavor, soon became compulsory through state action—in Massachusetts as early as 1647. In higher education New England likewise led the way with the establishment of Harvard College in 1636.

In the Middle colonies conditions were not as favorable for education. The settlers, in large part adherents to continental protestantism, were committed to the principle of elementary vernacular education for religious ends, and recognized in common with other colonists the need of secondary education for the training of leaders, but they represented so many sects and so diverse points of view that unified state action in matters of education was out of the question. The latter became, therefore, of necessity primarily a matter of parochial and private concern, and continued as such in the main throughout the period.

In the South conditions were still less favorable for education. The prevalence of the plantation system placed severe limitations upon community life. The motive for elementary education was relatively weak, since most of the settlers were