DAVID A. GOSLIN

THE SCHOOL IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

KEYSTONES OF EDUCATION SERIES

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DAVID A. GOSLIN
Associate Sociologist, Russell Sage Foundation

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ACADEMIC EDITORS

MERLE L. BORROWMAN, *University of Wisconsin*
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EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR., *Teachers College, Columbia University*

SCOTT, FORESMAN AND COMPANY

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 65-17731

Regional offices of Scott, Foresman and Company are located in Atlanta,
Dallas, Glenview, Palo Alto, and Oakland, N.J.

FOREWORD

The study of education is today in a state of ferment. With the expansion of educational horizons in American society, specialists of various sorts—historians, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists—are to an ever greater extent joining with professional educators in inquiries into the nature of our educational ideas and institutions. Together, these scholars are enhancing the vitality, authority, and inspiration required of educational concepts in a revolutionary era of social change and scientific discovery.

In some small measure, the Keystones of Education Series is intended to reflect and, hopefully, to advance this educational development. It brings to instructors and students, indeed to all those concerned with education, a unique group of relatively brief but authoritative books, selective in content so as to develop in considerable depth key areas of knowledge. Each book is an original treatment of its special topic. The series may be profitably used in both introductory and advanced courses, for the instructor is free to construct a course with the content, emphasis, and sequence he desires, by selecting a combination of books to serve as text material. Because of the distinguished academic consultants and authorship, instructors can confidently take full advantage of the flexibility of the series without fear of uneven quality, superficiality, or duplication.

The Keystones of Education Series will for the first time make available a variety of superior materials, in convenient and inexpensive format, for the entire pre-service education program at colleges and universities.

The Publishers

PREFACE

David A. Goslin's book in Scott, Foresman's Education Series is one of the few attempts to grapple directly with the primary tension that affects the American school system. That tension springs from the two strikingly different and often contradictory roles that education is called upon to play in modern society.

On the one hand, the school is clearly an agent of the state—funded by the people and established by them for the straightforward purpose of preserving their culture. As such, the school as an institution is necessarily and inherently *conservative* in its character. With the decline of the family and the neighborhood as vehicles of socialization, this conservative mission of education has been increasingly emphasized.

On the other hand, it has become a commonplace to point out that society has moved into an era of change more sweeping than the world has ever known. Half of all the scientists in human history are alive and working at this very moment. The translation of their efforts into technology has had obvious social consequences that are truly revolutionary. Also, minority groups have at last found both the leadership and the organization that permit their seeking full membership in the community of man. This development in race relations reaches into such diverse realms as the management of cities, employment and commercial practices, and patterns of housing as well as into the schools.

In the face of these new problems, education is hard pressed to contribute meaningfully to their solutions—to play an *innovative* role as well as its traditional conservative one. To help contend with these novel stresses, educators have proposed innovations in services, methods, and curricula. But these proposals cannot be effective without a critical consideration of how the school can best be related to the social order to produce democratic citizens in our tumultuous age.

This thorny problem is what Dr. Goslin's book is about, and it deals with it in a fashion at once quiet and muscular along two fronts. First, Dr. Goslin outlines a conceptual scheme which facilitates a student's perception of the school in relation to a dynamic society, thus allowing a richer understanding of the tensions within education in an orderly relationship to the problems of the American community. Second, he suggests and exemplifies an objective method of attacking these problems, maximizing the use of our developing sciences of man. On both counts, he has made an authentic contribution to our enlightenment.

Edward Joseph Shoben, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

During the last half century the field of education in this country has been in a more or less constant state of turmoil. As our society has grown, undergone rapid technological change, and become increasingly involved in world affairs, virtually every aspect of educational policy and practice has been the subject of controversy. Since World War II dramatic shifts in the international balance of power, accompanied by demonstrations of Soviet competence in fields heretofore thought to be the special province of United States technology, have made educational policy a matter of national concern. An increasingly informed public, along with its representatives in the government, has become involved in the movement to reform our educational system. Added to the general concern for the improvement of our schools has been the voice of minority groups who have recognized the importance of education in their fight for equality of opportunity and have taken advantage of the revolution in the schools to express their demands in increasingly militant tones. Professional educators, academicians, politicians, and laymen alike have expressed their views on education with equal force and, more important, assumed authority.

Out of the cauldron of public and professional controversy has come a startling array of opinions, beliefs, facts, and proposals that, in addition to keeping the fires of controversy raging, has led to a number of contradictory developments in American education over the past two decades. Great popular pressure has been generated to improve existing educational facilities and services, but soaring costs in many communities frequently have resulted in the defeat of school bond issues or proposed tax advances. Increased state and federal aid to education has been alternately advocated and rejected. School administrators have been urged to do away with frills in the curriculum and return to an emphasis on basic skills, while at the same time a growing volume of funds has been voted for vocational education, counseling services, programs for the evaluation of pupil aptitudes and interests, and the construction of elaborate physical facilities. Extensive programs have been introduced to facilitate social integration of the society, but recent trends indicate that schools are becoming somewhat more rather than less homogeneous, particularly in our largest cities.

A gradual loosening of family structure has placed the school in the position of having to assume greater responsibility for the total development of the child, while at the same time educational con-

servatives have called for schools to do away with nonintellective activities. Despite critical shortages of well-trained teachers in almost every school system in the country, relatively more funds have been allocated for new buildings than for higher teacher salaries or for improved teacher training facilities. Although public interest in and support for education has been rising steadily, newspapers and other outlets for public opinion have taken an increasingly critical posture toward the school.

These are only some of the important conflicts and paradoxes that have characterized educational policies and practices. But they serve to indicate both the complexity and diversity of the problems facing those in positions of responsibility for the management of our schools. Educators have had to deal with difficult issues in the past, but never before have they had to make their decisions in quite such a spotlight of public interest. Under such conditions the task of arriving at constructive as well as temperate solutions to pressing problems assumes monumental proportions. School board members and administrators, along with local, state, and national officials who must adjudicate among conflicting demands, are further handicapped by the absence of any explicit set of educational goals and by the lack of any clear-cut body of knowledge about the nature of the teaching-learning process.

The roots of educational unrest lie in the subsoil of a rapidly and dramatically changing society which has begun to make great demands on its educational system and which is likely to continue to create new educational problems at an even faster rate in the foreseeable future. Existing pressures and counter-pressures on educational institutions must be examined in the light of the changes that are taking place in the society and the relationship of the educational process to the ongoing operation and development of the society. In addition to an accelerating rate of technological change that threatens to create a situation in which current techniques and materials are outmoded by the time they are learned and distributed, American society is characterized by a population that is growing in size as well as in mobility, both geographical and, at least in some areas, social. It has also produced a variety of new patterns of social life which are manifested in changing social values and norms and in growing pressures on individuals to develop new ways of adapting to the society. In all of these processes of change and adaptation the school plays a central role in which educational problems reflect the major concerns of the society as a whole.

This book has two primary aims. The first of these is to provide the reader with the beginnings of a conceptual framework that will make it somewhat easier to perceive the school in its orderly relationship to the rapidly changing society in which it is located and

thereby to gain some understanding of the social sources of current educational problems. This will involve not only a discussion of the major functions of the school in society, but also an examination of the established ways in which influence is brought to bear on the educational process by the society and vice versa.

In attempting to conceptualize these problems, we have focused on the relation between the various technological, economic, and social changes that are taking place in American society and the school. The first three chapters following this introduction comprise a more or less loosely organized theoretical background for the remainder of the volume, in which an attempt is made to analyze specific aspects of the educational process in the context of the major social changes briefly outlined in Chapter III. In conceptualizing the relationship between the school and the society, the customary sociological distinction is made at the outset between function and structure, although the interdependence of these two aspects of a social system is clearly acknowledged. Chapter I is devoted to a brief examination of the various functions of the school in modern society, including the transmission of culture, socialization, the allocation of individuals to positions in the society, and the role of the educational system in producing new knowledge. Several additional and somewhat less apparent functions are also considered. In Chapter II the characteristics of the social system of the school, both internal and in its relation with the broader society, are considered in an effort to provide a firm basis for the subsequent examination of the way changes in the society are reflected in changing educational policies, practices, and problems.

Chapters IV and V explore the dual roles of the school as an agent of social control and integration as well as in supporting innovation in a changing society. A major theme throughout these two chapters is the conflict inherent in an educational system that is oriented both toward the future and the past, and the implications of this conflict for educational policy. Chapter VI is devoted to the problem of how social changes have affected the school's role in the development and allocation of manpower in the society. Organizational characteristics of the school, including its size, the degree of specialization of roles, personnel problems, communication, and the means by which resources are allocated, are considered in Chapter VII. Changes in the organizational structure of schools are related to the general trend toward bureaucratization within the society, and the implications of these changes for the effective functioning of the school are suggested. In the final chapter the role of education in a society that is rapidly becoming part of an emerging world community is considered, with special emphasis on the new role of the school in helping to prepare world as well as American citizens.

The second major purpose of this volume is to point out the necessity for an objective approach to the solution of educational problems. Educational controversy has been manifested in numerous ways: in speeches by nonacademicians as well as professional educators, in scholarly articles and research reports, in books intended both for the academic community and the general public, and increasingly in the mass media. It has affected everyone connected with the schools, from politicians to parents. While many of those who have spoken out on educational problems have added useful insights to our knowledge about the workings of the educational system, all too often the opinions expressed have served only to cloud already confused issues.

All of the interest in education on the part of such diverse groups is the result of three characteristics of the field of education: its acknowledged importance in the development and future progress of the society, its direct impact on nearly every member of the society, and the lack of any coherent body of knowledge that could form the core of a separate and meaningful academic discipline concerned with educational processes and problems. The first two of these attributes makes the success of the educational enterprise a matter of critical concern to all and in particular to those who hold positions of responsibility for education or for the continued progress and welfare of the society as a whole. Not only are one's life chances influenced in large part by the kind of educational experiences available, but a clear relationship may be discerned between the prospects of the total society for continued prosperity and the vitality of its educational system. Thus the stake in education of each member of the society is very great indeed. Because of the lack of a systematic and verified body of educational principles, those responsible for policy must depend in large part on related disciplines or on information derived from folklore, personal experience, and an unsystematized body of research data of dubious quality for insights into the nature of the educational process.

The effect has been to create a situation in which clear leadership in the search for solutions to educational problems has been lacking. Despite a growing volume of expenditures for educational research, most educators would admit that relatively little progress has thus far been made in providing answers to many of the serious questions that plague the administrator and the teacher. A variety of new educational techniques have been tried out during the past two decades, and innovations in educational hardware have reflected the pace of technological change in the rest of society. But despite ferment and experimentation, no widespread and fundamental changes have been made in teaching methods, curriculum content, or administrative techniques. In basic conceptions and approaches our

educational system is much the same today as it was fifty or one hundred years ago.

Nevertheless, the reality of present difficulties in the field of education cannot be denied. As our society continues to undergo rapid technological and social change, it would appear to be inevitable that existing pressures and counter-pressures on our educational system will become greater and greater. All of this raises the fundamental question of what approach or approaches to educational problems afford the greatest likelihood of generating useful solutions and, if innovations are forthcoming, what mechanisms are available for insuring their dissemination and adoption.

One of the great paradoxes of education has been the faith many of those in the field have placed in scientific research to provide answers to all manner of educational problems, only to ignore most of the principles of an organized and systematic approach to the very phenomena they are attempting to understand in their analysis of what is the matter with schools today. For the most part, schools of education have relied on providing their students with a set of guiding principles based on traditional educational philosophy, personal experience, and informal observation, along with a sprinkling of scientific findings from a few related disciplines, most notably psychology. Perhaps because of the fact that a great deal of what has gone on under the guise of educational research has failed to produce anything other than unsystematic and frequently unverified speculations about the nature of the educational process, research findings have not had a very great impact on what is being taught to individuals entering the field or on educational practice in general.

This has led some educators to suggest that our current emphasis on education research is misplaced and that, because of the demonstrated ineffectiveness of most such efforts, we ought to be taking a quite different approach to educational problems (although alternative ways of increasing our store of verified knowledge are not always provided). For example, Robert Ebel has gone so far as to remark that, "to call for additional research has long since ceased to be a novel suggestion. But in view of the record, it may not even qualify as a constructive suggestion."[1] Yet we are still faced with the problem of coming up with intelligent solutions to our pressing educational conflicts and controversies.

A major difficulty with many attempts to do research on the school or to make use of findings from other disciplines to increase our understanding of what goes on in the classroom is the lack of a clear-cut conceptualization of the educational process, especially in in the context of the social structure and functioning of the school and the nature of its response to external influences and pressures. The successful pursuance of the scientific method, whether it be in

the social sciences or in nuclear physics, is based as much on a useful conceptualization of the phenomena under study as on the sophistication of the observational techniques utilized. A sterile theory yields sterile research, and a lack of conceptualization results in either productive findings or a basis for theory construction only by chance. The field of education would appear to suffer badly from an overabundance of observation in proportion to the amount of conceptualization available to provide a basis for systematic theory and research. What is needed would seem to be a greater emphasis on conceptualization leading to carefully constructed theory and more *theory-based* research rather than less research. It is hoped that in a modest way the following chapters will provide a small part of the needed organization of thought about educational problems, as well as orient the student toward at least one specific conceptual framework within which the school may be viewed.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Functions of the School in Modern Society

Before an attempt can be made to assess the impact of changes that are taking place in our society on the school, some attention must be given to the question of what role the school plays vis-à-vis the society and its members. All societies, whether a modern industrialized society like our own or an isolated and primitive tribal society of past or present, are composed of a number of interrelated parts, each of which contributes in some manner to the ongoing character of the society. Every society, for example, must make some provision for collective decision-making if it is to survive for any significant period of time. Similarly, all societies must develop ways of allocating scarce resources, material and nonmaterial, and every society must make some provision for regulating the sexual behavior of its members in order to insure both the continuation of the society over time and the adequate socialization of new members.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship of that part of the modern society concerned with the maintenance and transmission of culture—the institution of education—to the other parts of the society as a whole. In particular we shall be concerned with what members of the society expect from their schools and how these expectations influence the educational process in the United States.

Each of the different institutions within the society, including the educational system, have important functions[1] in relation to the system as a whole and to its other parts. Thus many of the decisions made by government will have important consequences not only for the society as a whole but also for the functioning of other parts of the system, such as the family or the school. And, conversely, child rearing practices in the family are likely to affect what goes on in the school and, at least in the long run, governmental processes.

The conception of society as a system of interrelated parts is neither novel nor particularly sophisticated, yet it is frequently overlooked in efforts to understand the workings of a particular part of the system. For example, if one wishes to make any real headway in the analysis of the teaching process in American elementary schools, the particular student-teacher relationship must be set in a context that includes some consideration of the various functions performed by education as well as the ways in which other aspects of the social system influence the school. To consider only one of many possible consequences of this interdependence, if certain groups within the society view the elementary school primarily as a place to send children to get them out of the house, then this view of the school's function will almost certainly have an effect on what goes on in the school.

THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

From the standpoint of the society as a whole, and often of groups within the society, the primary function of education is the maintenance of culture. "Man's capacity to learn, to organize learning in symbolic forms, to communicate this learning as knowledge to other members of the species, and to act on the basis of learning or knowledge is the source of all cultural phenomena. . . . Any culture and the civilization based upon that culture must depend upon the ability of the civilization to articulate and transmit its learning as semiautonomous, cognitive systems. These represent the accumulated knowledge in every field of inquiry and comprise the subject matter in all education. This is what we mean when we speak of the school's responsibility in transmitting a cultural heritage."[2]

Culture, of course, includes more than just the "accumulated knowledge in every field of inquiry." It includes the values, beliefs, and norms which have been passed down from generation to generation, albeit with frequent modifications, throughout the history of the society. "Education transmits a common cultural fund to the next generation and in the process helps to bring hordes of young barbarians to adult ways that are continuous with the past."[3]

The transmission and accumulation of culture from generation to generation has been the distinguishing characteristic of man since

the earliest beginnings of human society. The role of formal education in this process has thus been significant throughout only a fraction of man's history. As Burton Clark points out, "the earliest 'educational systems' were no more than a woman instructing a daughter or a man and a boy walking, talking, and working together. In the Stone Age, we may bet, there were no elementary classes in flint chipping; a boy learned to chip flints by watching adults."[4] As the store of man's knowledge has grown and the groups in which he lives have become more complex, the development of specialized facilities to take over where the family leaves off in this process of cultural transmission has become necessary. During most of recent history and extending as far back as the days of the Greek and Roman civilizations, formal education was restricted to a tiny minority of the society's members, usually the ruling elite or members of religious orders. The Industrial Revolution, however, in addition to producing a flood of innovations that caused the reservoir of man's knowledge and technical skills to burst its heretofore relatively narrow confines, radically altered the social structure of the society. No longer was the family the primary unit of production, as was the case in a predominantly agrarian economy. Instead a large number of men (not to mention women and children) found themselves leaving the home every day to work in manufacturing plants or offices. This shift in the basic social structure of the society (which tended to split up the family unit), together with a growing variety of available occupational positions (each requiring somewhat different skills and knowledge), made it impossible for new members of the society to continue to learn by observation of their parents alone. Not only did the young have more choices as to what skills they might acquire, than their parents, but no longer did the breadwinner of the family work where his children could watch him and learn from him.

"In brief, formal schooling became a necessity as the home and the community became ineffectual, even incompetent, in training the young for adulthood through informal contact. A new class of cultural agents—the teachers of the commoners—grew up. The changing nature of knowledge and work brought the children of the common man into the schoolhouse and gave to the schools a greatly broadened and deepened role in cultural transmission and continuity."[5]

To the extent that current trends in our society continue to accentuate this separation of occupational and family roles, we may predict that the function of the school as a primary agent of cultural transmission will be enhanced. We may not conclude, however, that the family is no longer important as a socializing agent, or that the school has taken over all of what used to be the family's functions in regard to the socialization of the young and the transmission of culture. Although there appears to be a trend toward admission of

children to schools in this country at earlier ages, the family still serves as virtually the sole agent of socialization during the critical first four or five years of the child's life. It is during this period that the child learns to talk and forms the initial significant social relationships that will greatly influence his adaptation and accommodation in subsequent interpersonal situations. The child also begins to internalize the social values and normative prescriptions and proscriptions that will make it possible for him to function as a member of an orderly society during the remainder of his life.

Nor does the family lose its interest in the child when he reaches school age. In most cases parents, brothers and sisters, and members of the extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, et cetera) will continue to exert strong socializing influences throughout the period of the child's formal education and, to a lesser extent, thereafter. As we shall see in subsequent discussions, it is likely that many of the special problems with which the school must contend stem from this division of responsibility for socialization of the young. Not only must the school begin with children who have already acquired a set of values (some of which may conflict with values that the school is committed to inculcating), but it must continue to deal with parallel and sometimes competing influences from the family (not to mention the child's peer group) during the time that the child is in its care.

These problems are further complicated by the fact that in this country the school traditionally has been viewed in a service relationship to the family, rather than as a legitimate independent socializing influence. This relationship between the family and the school is perhaps understandable in light of the fact that it is the family that is usually held responsible for faulty socialization and not the school. But this does not make the school's task any easier. Our society has come to expect the school to transmit to the child an enormously complex culture which includes not only a great deal of accumulated knowledge and many complex skills, both intellectual and physical, but an even more sophisticated and complicated set of values and norms which comprise the ideological basis of our cultural heritage.

It is a frequently acknowledged fact that the stability and continuity of our society as presently constituted depends not only on the ability of its citizens to read, write, and complete their income tax forms, but on their belief in and adherence to the political, religious, and social principles on which the institutions of the society are based. Thus the school is expected to teach the child something about such diverse ideals as democracy, the rule of law, free enterprise, and even the desirability of monogamous marriage.[6] And it is also expected to persuade future citizens of the society of the necessity of behaving in accordance with these principles and practices.