The social dimension of education has been recognized only within the present century. At the outset this recognition brought little more than halfhearted attempts to prepare pupils to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens in the society of which they would become members in full standing only some years later. Education in citizenship thus often was far removed from the interests of both teacher and learner, and the effort generally was terminated with a perfunctory final examination.

More recently, studies carefully conducted to learn how personality develops in relation to the learner’s total environment have revealed startling evidence of the importance of long-neglected social factors. It has been found, for example, that it makes a great deal of difference for the status the individual ultimately will enjoy in his society as to whether, as a child and adolescent, his skin was white, his family group was unbroken, the family income was above or below the average for his neighborhood, or if the standards held by his parents agreed with those of his peer group.

In the wake of such findings many educators have been persuaded to accept responsibility for correcting in the school deficiencies found in the pupil’s out-of-school environment. The ability to analyze the supporting community therefore has become a highly prized attribute of the master teacher, as has the ability to predict the precise effects upon the individual pupils the discovered features are expected to exert. The sociological foundations of education have acquired importance in the education of teachers as a consequence.

Still more recently, the emergence of anthropology as a social science has led to the interpretation of the social environment in terms of an evolving organic whole. The emergent society thereby is made the point of reference in describing the education of the child who, in turn, also is viewed as a living organism progressively seeking adaptation consistent with the enhancement of his own standards of dignity and worth. Social education in this context is looked upon as the process of helping individuals “keep up” within a world of constantly changing values, relationships, and material considerations. The educational objective is the maintenance of personal integrity. The individual is looked upon as being of one piece with roots in the past and hopes for fulfillment lying in the future. Personal adaptations are made in the present situation in
terms of how the learner interprets it, a process within which value patterns play an important role. This concept of social education obviously contrasts with the older concept which holds that adjustments are made piecemeal by changing behavior, or the environment, one feature at a time.

Turning to the two publications we have been asked to review, it seems fair to say that the book by Havighurst and Neugarten belongs to the earlier group of studies indicated above. It describes in lucid fashion the social structure within which the American school must operate today, the manner in which children become aware of the relations their places in society force upon them, how those relationships create problems of acceptance and adjustment, and, very importantly, what teachers may do to help. This is a well organized, carefully written, scholarly book and it contains much information highly useful to classroom teachers on all levels.

Education and Culture, a new book prepared under the direction of George D. Spindler, with the assistance of sixteen recognized scholars in their respective fields, approaches the problem of the social education of the child from the anthropologist's point of view. The anthropological approach is described, and a strong case is made in support of its extensive use in education. Studies of evolving cultures are reported to show their impact upon the individuals growing up within those cultures. The complexity of the problems are shown to increase for the individuals as the speed and the degree of change increase. In the sections specifically written to draw generalizations from the relevant data, parents and teachers are helped to understand the nature of such problems.

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It is fair to say that both the sociological and the anthropological approaches have advanced substantially our understanding of the education needed in our times. It is highly probable that these two books, in combination, afford the reader as concise yet comprehensive orientation in the sociological foundations of education as any text, or combination of two texts available today can provide. We must remember, however, that these are scientific books, that is, books written from the viewpoint of scientists bent upon describing society, social changes, and the individual as a social being just as they are. This is the proper function of a scientist; but so long as the authors maintain the scientific viewpoint—and most did throughout—we as parents, teachers, or members of the community should not expect help from them on the troublesome question of what changes ought to be made, or to what values or goals we should give our loyalties. For such answers we must be prepared to look elsewhere.

Reviewed by I. N. Thut, Professor of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs.


This book continues a one man crusade to stimulate public debate and action and arouse professional guilt feelings. Like the author’s earlier efforts it contains some good sense, considerable nonsense, and generous amounts of incense.

Ably and persuasively presented, the central portion of the book is testimony, mainly on English education, before the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Appropriations. That is prefaced with an overview chapter larded with the fancied-up facts about American education so dear to the Council for Basic Education. The third chapter pleads for a national standard-setting body. The final portion, nearly two-fifths, contains in the main examples of examinations set for the English General Certification of Education, along with several shorter items including a sobering excerpt from an Englishman’s survey of certain aspects of Michigan education.

One would do the education journal reader an injustice to repeat Rickover’s criticisms of American schools. By now they are well known to all teachers, and they continue to be partly correct, but as usual the Admiral is inaccurate with respect to the extent and utterly unfair with respect to the sources of either fault or honest difference in approach.

Some of this, though, both the charitable and the more durable can forgive. Despite his blunderbuss attacks, Rickover espouses a good and needy cause: the improvement of American education. He writes to challenge the layman, but he does deny or forget that that same layman has had as much or more to do with American education than the “awful establishment” he decries. Unfortunately, too, in his vigor he misleads those who read uncritically; and failing to put aside his penchant for abuse, he says much to alienate a very great many of those who heartily support his central theme.

Rickover is too bright a man to continue such diatribes against straw men, although a few misguided educators have understandably aggravated him by inviting him back to his submarines. Surely, he would be far better received, much more effective and influential, among the vast number of educators who “can and do” want to act if he
could spare himself these side swipes of highly questionable validity.

At the same time, in pursuit of his purpose and ours, he would do well to be more critical and more accurate about what he would offer as a substitute. No American educator of substance, in his right mind, would dismiss the wisdom of continental or English colleagues, although it must be said that teacher and administrator preparation in this country egregiously neglects comparative education study. I dare say that Rickover, nuclear specialist that he is, knows vastly more about European education than all but a literal handful of American educationists. Indeed, then, he has a reservoir of knowledge to share, but if he would exhort or teach, he would do well to seem, to some at least, to give a more cautious treatment and more accurate presentation and interpretation of his knowledge. Even the research that pains him so much might help him.

That all is not right with English education is well known. Vigorous debates continue there over just the items Rickover would have us adopt, although it must be fairly stated the admiral wants them thoroughly discussed while he believes there can hardly be any doubt of the conclusion. Eleven plus, school size, places in the grammar school, the influence of the independent school, the value of comprehensiveness, the content of education, adapted if not adjusted (spare the evil word) education, streaming the primary, narrowness of curricula, external examination, freedom of the teacher, the tremendous range in quality of program and results, extension of education, all plague the thoughtful English educator.

There is great dissatisfaction with age eleven selection and the long range sta-
tus influence of the tri-partite secondary school structure. Because of this dissatisfaction, there is a leavening going on in each type of school, reminding one of the fate of many one-time strictly vocational schools in America. There seems to be no evidence that the tri-partite school has resulted in any greater development of talent, and not a few English educationists (even in staid old England they have infiltrated) see the gradual merger of present segments of the state supported school.

Rickover seems most telling in his argument that English youth "learn more," earlier. (To his credit he is one critic who reminds the college academicians that they too do a pretty miserable job.) Particularly does he emphasize the superiority of attention to the basic subjects and his plea that we can get more results from American children ought not to go unheeded. Obviously Rickover does not discuss all the ramifications related to results, but he does tie them to teaching power and examination control. While those items by no means explain the results, we should not consider them much less than the central core.

The first, teaching power, is something every educationist wants and has pleaded for with the public, the legislature, and the college faculty. Rickover is simply wrong when he accuses the copper riveted bureaucracy of being opposed to or unenlightened about what constitutes better teacher preparation.

On the other hand, the educationist has not wanted external examinations. Fearful of curriculum control, and establishment of another, less reasonable kind of copper riveted constrictor, the educationist has protested vigorously. Still, there are many who can equate good education and tough, external examinations and who seriously doubt the valid-

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ity of either excessive or injurious anxiety among the thousands who have been so examined.

There is no doubt much of Rickover’s proposal to install the British Education Act of 1944 will wait long to come to pass here, although no bona fide American educator should wait longer to study it, its history, or its effect. At the same time there seems little doubt that external examination of education, governmental or privately ventured, will continue to grow. It behooves American educators soon to debate for the public whether or not there should be established, as Rickover would have it, a National Education Commission with power to write examinations and issue certificates to those who want them.

References on English Education


This is a journalist’s chronicle of “the adventure of educational television.” The story is one of places and events and of the individuals who labored to make television work for educational purposes.

The labors of detail encountered include legal, fiscal and organizational problems also—planning, designing, constructing, operating, managing; getting laws and ordinances changed, newspapers convinced, organizations committed, unions reconciled, and money in the bank.

The individuals represented include the “original twenty” plus twenty dedicated souls. These persons lent their shoulders to getting stations on the air, either as influences on their own or as representatives of organizations of influence on the local, state or national scene.

A large measure of effort (and funds) was provided by the Ford Foundation. Numerous also were efforts of ad hoc television committees and local foundations. Passing references are made to the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board, the American Council on Education, the National Education Association, and others, as regards their involvement in the chronicle of educational television.

As a journalist’s history of the development of educational television (with a measure of the history of educational radio thrown in), Powell’s book provides a kind of feeling tone about television, not that he is inaccurate in his reportage. The tone suggests to even an uninform ed reader that getting on the air is a major effort in and of itself. Once this is accomplished the task becomes one of
sustaining the effort. Although only one educational television effort has fallen through (a UHF station), the effectiveness of the output of those still "in business" is quite uneven. Unfortunately many have taken the commercial broadcast as their production model. Certainly, however, a reader of this volume (and others) sees the fallacy in this.

What is educational television? The author succinctly gives his reply:

"1. This is television that you watch on purpose, selecting each program for what it promises.

"2. This is television that invites you to do something, learn something, think about something: It expects you to participate.

"3. This is television whose purpose is to get you to turn off the set and do what is suggested: read, paint and discuss."

—Reviewed by ALBERT L. GOLDBERG, Coordinator, Instructional Materials, Public Schools, Livonia, Michigan.