

Significant Books

Reviewers:

Bernard Lonsdale
L. Thomas Hopkins

Organization of Public Schools. D. Richard Wynn. Washington, D.C.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1964. 114 p., including the index. \$3.50.

State Politics and the Public Schools. Nicholas A. Masters, Robert H. Salisbury and Thomas H. Eliot. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. 319 p. plus an index.

Public Education in American Society. Kenneth H. Hansen. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963. 418 p. \$6.50.

The above titles represent three additions to the professional literature in education. Each has a unique purpose. At the same time there is a thread related to the organization of public schools that runs through the three.

Wynn's book not only describes organization as is but projects it further through discussion of trends and issues.

State Politics and the Public Schools places its emphasis on the effect of politics upon various aspects of organization.

Hansen, too, puts some stress on organization. However, his chief emphasis is on the curriculum.

Organization of Public Schools is a volume in the Library of Education Series. As the title implies, the focus is on the organization of public schools. The size of the book, a little more than 100 pages, in no way indicates its quality. What is lacking in number of pages is compensated for in the meatiness with

which the author treats his subject. It is obvious that the purpose in writing the book is to present as clear and concise a description as possible of the organization of public schools in the United States. This purpose is admirably accomplished in spite of the variations that exist in school systems throughout the nation.

The material is organized around four large topics: (a) Organization of the School District, (b) Administrative Organization and Staffing of School Systems, (c) Organization of the Attendance Units, and (d) Trends and Issues in School Organization and Staffing.

The first chapter starts with a description of local school districts and their relation to the State and Federal government. The author presents a case for the reorganization of school districts and descriptions of programs of reorganization in progress. In a most objective manner, Wynn presents the advantages and disadvantages of local control, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of reorganization. This objectivity is characteristic of the presentations throughout the book.

In the second chapter, the organizations and functions of boards of education are described. These accounts are followed by descriptions of the administrative and supervisory staff organization.

The third and fourth chapters bring into focus a number of trends in the organization of attendance units, various

structures set up for attendance, grouping of children and other practices within the structure. Many of the trends have become issues, with camps being organized "for and against" and educators and the lay public taking sides.

Wynn continues in his objective manner to present the pros and cons of the issues. In spite of his objectivity he presents the issues without the kind of shellac that leaves them anemic and lifeless.

The reviewer feels that *The Organization of Public Schools* makes a significant contribution to the literature, which helps those not in the profession to understand better how schools are organized, and also trends and issues related to the organization.

State Politics and the Public Schools—an educator would be naive indeed if he were unaware of the realities of state politics and the public schools. Unfortunately too many educators are not sensitive to the numerous ramifications that impinge upon education because of these realities. Educators who live under the illusion that education and politics have barely a nodding acquaintance will have their illusions dispelled when they read this soundly documented analysis of the political background of education by Masters, Salisbury and Eliot.

In the preface, Eliot says, "In America, local control of the public schools as an article of political faith flies in the face of facts. The boundaries of school districts—indeed, their very existence—depend on *state* action. A substantial proportion of their operating revenues are provided from *state* funds. Teachers are certified by *state* officials in accordance with *state* laws. In short, the caliber of the public schools in any given district is to a considerable extent determined by the constitutional provisions, the stat-

utes, and the administrative decisions of the state of which that school district is a subordinate unit."

The authors sought information related to such questions as: (a) What are the non-pedagogic forces at work in the public schools? (b) What is the position of educators in state political systems? (c) How much influence or power do the educators have? and (d) How and where do they find support for their demands?

In order to find answers to these questions, the authors engaged in a careful examination of the public school systems in three states—Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri. They interviewed persons in these states who were active at strategic points of educational decision making. They also studied state constitutions and school codes to determine the functions and responsibilities of various state agencies for formulating and administering school policy.

The authors say, "Of necessity, we restricted the project to selected aspects of state politics, mainly those decisions that would ultimately be approved in the legislative arena. Attention was focused on the 1961 sessions in the three states. The dramatic contrasts we studied illustrate the importance of discussing the politics of education with a clear understanding of the variations in policy processes that occur from state to state. Our efforts reveal that there are almost as many variations as there are uniformities."

In conclusion, the authors present hypotheses which they say are explanatory rather than prescriptive. These hypotheses merit the careful study and consideration of educators across the nation. As one reads them, he inevitably compares and contrasts the state politics and the public schools of his state with those studied by the authors.

Public Education in American Society is the second edition of Hansen's earlier book by the same title; the purpose of both editions is the same. This edition, as was the first, is directed toward the prospective teacher. It is Hansen's hope that the book will guide the prospective teacher "through the fascinating complex of American Education and help him to approach the system and its major problems with an intelligent and analytical viewpoint."

The second edition updates the first by including such timely topics as teaching machines, educational television, the nongraded school, team teaching and social and philosophical backgrounds of current educational practices. In fact, there is hardly a topic or issue, either new or old, which does not get some coverage. In order to protect himself against criticism because of slight coverage or bland treatment of a topic or issue, the author includes bibliographies and thought and action topics to stimulate the reader in developing his own point of view.

The content of the book is presented in four parts. Part One—Backgrounds, Part Two—The Work of the School, Part Three—Problems for Teachers, Part Four—Educational Perspective. Numerous topics are treated in each of these parts. Because of the inclusiveness and rapid movement through many topics, one is left with the feeling that there is an oversimplification of a number of deep issues in education.

The liveliest writing comes in Part IV. Readers will enjoy particularly the section in which the author warns the reader to "beware the Pronghorned Platitude." He takes what he calls "trouble making statements commonly made about modern education and modern schools," for example, "We don't teach

subject matter; we teach children." He then shows how these platitudes block communication and build misunderstandings.

—Reviewed by BERNARD LONSDALE, Visiting Professor of Education, University of Maryland, College Park.

Education and Society. *W. Warren Kallenbach and Harold M. Hodges, Jr., Editors.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1963. 474 p. \$6.95.

Education in World Perspective. *Emmet John Hughes, Editor.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962. 201 p. \$4.75.

Curriculum Development for Elementary Schools in a Changing Society. *Muriel Crosby.* Boston, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1964. 409 p. \$5.95.

Education and Society is a collection of 38 articles by 24 authors cast into nine chapters—The Social Nature of Man and Education, The Nature of Culture, Culture and Personality, The Family, The Culture of the School, Deviant Behavior, Mass Culture, Social Class, Our National Purpose and Education—with a preface to each by the editors. In the general introduction, Professor Robert Havighurst writes that "no teacher can *teach* successfully if he knows nothing of the students whom he teaches or of the society in which he teaches" (p. xv). This book is to help the prospective teacher become acquainted with "those parts of sociology . . . which bear most directly on education" (p. xv).

The selections are from outstanding authorities in their respective fields. The treatment of the subject matter is descriptive and academically interpretative. How teachers could use this to become better selves or dynamic teachers

is nowhere discussed. In the last chapter, Adlai Stevenson emphasizes freedom as central in our national purpose and goes on to say, "Freedom is never an accomplished fact. . . . It is always a process" (p. 435); yet neither he nor any other author discusses what that process is and how it can be better applied.

In this same chapter, Max Lerner says that one aspect of our national purpose is *élan*, which he defines as "the feeling of commitment, the feeling of being on fire, a sense of mission, a sense that there are things worth dying for and worth living for. . . ." (p. 437). He goes on to say that civilizations have died for two reasons: first, the rigidity of their master institutions, and second, the failure of the people to sense their own growth possibilities and to create the new meanings necessary for their dynamic development. There is little material in the book which will arouse in students an emotional commitment to move from static character types, roles and values to an emerging, dynamic, creative process on which rests their future success. For a less functional purpose, the selections are pertinent.

Education in World Perspective is a series of nine papers and five interpretative addresses selected from those presented at the International Conference on World Educational Problems at the Vassar College Centennial in 1962. The Conference group was composed of forty women and three men, all distinguished in their fields. These fourteen papers are by women representing an equal number of countries or cultural viewpoints. The book opens with a penetrating interpretation of the pattern of discussion by the editor, Emmet John Hughes, who summarizes that the most striking quality of the Conference was "an *atmosphere*, an attitude beyond utterance, a sense of

historic *concern*, a muted but manifest awareness that, in all the crises of man's story, the stakes had never been so high as in this living moment" (p. 3), and "this universal and unprecedented challenge cannot be met by any static purpose" (p. 6).

The material in the papers fully supports both the critical urgency in the world situation and the studied lack of deliberative effort to meet it. For "any development great enough to be judged beneficial to our whole world of the future—belongs to education" (p. 137), yet neither the people nor the educators have sensed the crisis, felt deeply a commitment to the future, seen the need to move rapidly from static knowledge to an emerging process, accepted the challenge to help everyone learn how to learn.

These papers support the thesis that the universal revolution in other cultural areas has only rarely been felt inside the schools where the demand to learn fragmented knowledge has arrested in students the development of their biological process of integration of self. But only more mature people can lead the tottering world from destructive aggression to integrative cooperation as a means of dealing with social conflicts. Thus some day soon people everywhere must face this stark reality.

In *Curriculum Development for Elementary Schools in a Changing Society*, Muriel Crosby has suggested a way of meeting the challenge so clearly stated by the Vassar group. The basic thesis is that "a curriculum design to foster effective human relations is needed if education is to fulfill its function in a changing society" (p. 1).

A meaning common to all three books is that the basic outlines of self and personality are laid down in the first six

years of life, so are a responsibility of the home. Yet the school can do much to expand, keep flexible, these guidelines; to enrich, deepen the experiences out of which they were formed and to redirect them by a more cooperative human process. To do this the emphasis in the school must shift from fixed, fragmented pieces of cultural knowledge to a life process of growing, developing, learning.

With deep understanding of the experiments in this area conducted between World Wars I and II, Dr. Crosby has enriched both the earlier basic concepts and their related practices. Teachers and pupils through cooperative interaction plan their program of activities, decide how to put these plans into action and evaluate their learnings. The old dichotomy of subject versus child-centered curricula is avoided, for the focus is on the process of human relations.

To raise the level of human relations in classrooms from an authoritarian, even though frequently benevolent, to a realistic cooperative atmosphere, the whole program of the school must be changed. Not only must there be new rules of the game, there must be teachers who understand, accept and practice these rules. Yet parents and educators want children to learn the so-called expanded 3 R's usually organized as subjects and taught under the old rules. So the book has a section of 200 pages in which teachers are helped to meet these reading, writing and other usual requirements through the need-experiences of children.

This book should be extremely valuable to educators who wish to take both a forward look and some sound steps in that direction. The many illustrations of better practices are sometimes boring since they are descriptive rather than analytical, for they deal too much with what the teacher does and not enough

with the underlying meanings and process.

Anyone studying these three books should, it seems to this reviewer, conclude that the present unsettled and unsatisfactory conditions in the world are caused by people who have little empathy, understanding, acceptance of each other in spite of these many centuries of so-called civilization. And only these same people with this ineffective culture within them can make conditions better. A difficult but surmountable task.

—Reviewed by L. THOMAS HOPKINS,
Professor Emeritus of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York.

Neutral?—Hart

(Continued from page 79)

with Bertrand Russell that, "The kind of virtue that can be produced by guarded ignorance is frail and fails at the first touch of reality."³

Although it is probable that teachers in every generation have felt that their era represented the most crucial period in civilization, it cannot be disputed that our time is a perilous one and that our hope today is for a clear-thinking world citizenry which respects the rights of mankind. It seems apparent, then, that we should not do violence to the right and responsibility of individuals to examine points of view which are popular or unpopular, accepted by the majority or by only a minority.

Mankind can be rescued from the effects of closed-mindedness by training in open-mindedness.⁴

³ Bertrand Russell. *Unpopular Essays*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950. p. 120.

⁴ Ashley Montagu. *Education and Human Relations*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958. p. 188.

Copyright © 1964 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.