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EDUCATION AND SOCIOLOGY IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

Education has usually been defined either descriptively or telically. Descriptive definitions emphasize the process of education, while telic (from the Greek *telos* : goal) definitions stress its goals or objectives. Emphasis on pedagogical goals is undoubtedly important, since a clear understanding of objectives facilitates their attainment considerably. Stressing the process of education is also important, since process means a change characterized by a consistent quality or the prelude to a certain condition. Consequently, a satisfactory definition of education should consist of both descriptive and telic elements. If, for instance, as Rabelais asserted, the goal of education in the forming of a complete man, then, a satisfactory definition would, first, include this goal, and, second, tell us how an individual is changed into a complete man.

Descriptive and telic elements are easily seen in the following definitions, which represent the ideas of some of the greatest thinkers who have dealt with the problem of education.

Socrates (470–399 B.C.) : The goal of education is to dispel error and to discover truth.

Plato (427–347 B.C.) : Education consists in giving to the body and the soul all the perfection of which they are susceptible.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) : The true goal of education is the attainment of happiness through perfect virtue.

Luther (1483–1546) : The goal of education is preparation for more effective service in state and church.

Rabelais (1494–1553) : The goal of education is the forming of a complete man, skilled in art and industry.

Montaigne (1533–1592) : Education is the art of forming men, not specialist.

B a c o n (1561–1626) : Education, as science itself, is but a means to an end—the dominance of man over things; human science and human power coincide.

C o m e n i u s (1592–1670) : Education is the development of the whole man.

L o c k e (1632–1704) : The attainment of a sound mind in a sound body is the goal of education. The business of education is not to make the young perfect in any one of the sciences, but so to open and dispose their minds as may best made then capable of any, when they shall apply themselves to it.

R o u s s e a u (1712–1778) : Correct education disposes the child to take the path that will lead him to truth when he has reached the age to understand it, and to goodness when he has acquired the faculty of recognizing and loving it.

K a n t (1724–1804) : The goal of education is to train children, not with reference to their success in the present state of society, but to a better possible state, in accordance with an ideal conception of humanity.

P e s t a l o z z i (1746–1827) : Education means a natural, progressive, and systematic development of all the powers.

H e r b a r t (1776–1841) : The goal of education is to produce a well-balanced many-sidedness of interest. Morality is universally acknowledged as the highest goal of humanity, and consequently, of education.

F r o e b e l (1782–1852) : The goal of education is the realization of a faithful, pure, inviolate, and hence holy life.

E m e r s o n (1803–1882) : The goal of education is to train away all impediment, and to leave only pure power.

R u s k i n (1819–1900) : The goal of education is the manufacture of souls of good quality.

S p e n c e r (1820–1903) : To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge.

J a m e s (1842–1910) : Education is the organization of acquired habits of action such as will fit the individual to his physical and social environment.

D e w e y (1859–1952) : Education is the process of remarking experience, giving it a more socialized value through increased indivi-

dual experience, by giving the individual better control over his own powers¹.

The present author's definition, involving both descriptive and telic elements, could be stated as follows: education is the process whereby individuals, groups, and social institutions of various types provide a human being with experience which change his capacities into abilities to think, feel, and act in ways resulting in adjustment to his physical and socio-cultural environments and conducive to a happy, creative, and useful life.

According to the above, definition, education is a process, which as was mentioned previously, means change characterized by a consistent quality or the prelude to a certain condition—in this case, it is a change leading to adjustment and to a happy, creative, and useful life. This process, as the definition further indicates, is initiated not only by the school—formal education—but also by various other social institutions as well as by groups and isolated individuals—informal education. A child, for instance, is taught the English language by his family before he is even aware of the existence of the public school system. Later, the church familiarizes him with a certain ethical code, while his play group teaches him how to engage in various recreational activities, and individual friends provide him with useful information. Such experiences tend to change a human being's capacities into abilities. A capacity may be defined as a potential for improvement of a given function, while ability means proficiency in carrying out various skills. In other words, a capacity is a potential or future ability, while ability refers to the present. For instance, Mozart's opera, *Bastien und Bastienne*, composed at the age of 11, was the product of musical abilities; and so were his compositions at the age of four. What characterized him before receiving any training in Apollo's art, however, was musical capacity, not ability. The abilities resulting from capacities in this way may, for example, lead to a person to think in terms of Riemann's non-Euclidean elliptic geometry and thus formulate the theory of relatively—provided he has Einstein's capacities. Or, he may also be able to control his feelings and emotions and thus avoid disorganizing experiences. Finally, he may be able to act as an adequately socialized human being. When analogous changes have been accomplished, education's goals have also been achieved, that is, the educated person has established a harmonious relationship with his environment, and his life is dominated by a fair amount of welfare, productivity,

originality, constructiveness, sociability, humanitarianism, and altruism.

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL

In the previous section it was stated that formal education is the task of the school. The objectives of this type of education, according to the seven cardinal principles accepted by the National Education Association in 1918, are citizenship, home membership, ethical character, health, vocation, leisure, and command of the fundamental processes. Twenty years later, a statement by the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association included the following general objectives: self-realization, economic efficiency, civic responsibility, and human relationship².

A careful study of these and other objectives is necessary today, in view of the fact that formal education is constantly becoming more extensive. That the latter is true is indicated by several recent developments, including the rapid growth of the graduate student body in the United States. where there were 14,406 such students in 1918 and 54,584 in 1940. Furthermore, for the same period, the number of graduate schools offering the Ph. D. degree grew from 46 to 96, while the corresponding figures for the Ph. D. degree received annually were 562 and 3,526³.

The spectacular expansion of formal education on this and lower levels tends, Robert Faris⁴ believes, to create several desirable conditions. First, morbidity and accident rates affected by the amount of general knowledge among people will decrease. Second, as a result of this decrease, certain hospitalisation expenses should be eliminated completely. Third, the number of unskilled laborers will be reduced, while that of skilled workers and professionals will go up. Fourth, interest in sustaining a democratic government and the people's attention to it should be intensified. Indeed, various studies indicate, for instance, that about six times as many people with college education write to public officials as do persons with only a grade school education. It is also interesting to note that American citizens who voted for President Eisenhower refused to support his favourite candidates for seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Perhaps this is indicative of mature political judgment enabling the voter to consider each candidate individually. Fifth, prejudice against different races and nationalities should decrease, since studies have already revealed

that formal education is usually accompanied by liberal attitudes toward various out-groups⁵. Sixth, international co-operation should become easier, for, as various surveys indicate, faith in the United Nations, for example, is more typical of educated persons. Seventh, political stability should be reinforced, in view of the fact that extremists such as Huey Long and Gerald Smith as well as corrupt political machines are usually supported by persons with a limited education. Finally, vice and many other types of personal disorganization should decrease substantially.

Faris's statement concerning the effects of formal education is partially supported by at least one nation-wide survey. According to some of the findings in this survey, formal education leads to tolerance of other groups and their ideologies, acceptance of new ideas, and religious, political and social nonconformity⁶.

More specifically, the school's functions may be outlined as follows :

1. To impart knowledge. It is obvious, of course, that knowledge is not enough, for even literates may suffer from what Case⁷ calls «social imbecility», namely, immaturity leading to war, crime, sensational journalism, deleterious habits, and the like. Indeed, man's social age is still much lower than his mental age. This is indicated, for example, by the controversy concerning nuclear tests, which to some scientists, are quite harmful, while others assert that such tests are definitely harmless⁸. Undoubtedly, it is a sign of colossal «social imbecility» that mankind first unleashes a fantastic force and then attempts to ascertain its effects!

2. To produce intellectual curiosity.
3. To teach problem-solving techniques.
4. To make creative minds.
5. To transmit culture.
6. To evaluate the transmitted culture.
7. To create a certain amount of social stability and continuity - which is accomplished through the transmission of culture.
8. To make a certain amount of social change acceptable.
9. To direct social change.
10. To create progress - which is achieved by directing social change wisely. Community controls, however, especially on the elementary and secondary levels, usually prevent the school from introducing a new social order.
11. To give vocational training.
12. To facilitate vertical social mobility of the ascending type, that is, to help people achieve a higher social status. A study of big business leaders in America, for example, revealed that 57 per cent of them are college graduates, while in 1928 the corresponding percentage was 32⁹.
13. To form hygienic habits.
14. To create character.
15. To make a certain amount of authority acceptable.
16. To impart information concerning political issues. That this is achieved to some extent is seen in

a study by Almond, who found that 22 per cent of people with a grammar school education, 50 per cent of those with a high school education, and 64 per cent of those with a college education knew what a tariff is. The corresponding percentage for people capable of expressing opinions concerning reciprocal trade policy were 51, 76, and 90, while those referring to persons belonging to various organizations were 7, 15, and 32, respectively¹⁰. 17. To lead to the formulation of a sound philosophy of life. This type of behaviour, as a study by Campbell, Gurin, and Miller shows, is definitely influenced by formal education. According to their findings, 55 per cent of people with a grammar school education, 67 per cent of those with a high school education and 79 per cent of those with a college education voted in the 1948 election. The corresponding percentages for the 1952 election were 62, 80, and 90¹¹. 19. To make people capable of using their leisure time wisely. 20. To lead to a happy family life. 21. To create understanding among people. 22. To promote international cooperation. 23. To facilitate the assimilation of minority groups.

The realization of the above objectives is usually facilitated, at least to some extent, by the fact that the school is an influential social institution. This is due to several reasons. First of all the school maintains contacts with practically all children. Second, the child is received during his impressionable years. Third, the contacts between the school and the child are continual. Fourth, these contacts are also close. Fifth, the school, performs what is known as the residual function, that is tasks no longer carried out by the home and the neighbourhood. Sixth, the work of educational institutions is supported by public opinion. Seventh, the law also supports such work. Eighth, the teacher is usually respected and trusted by the family, cooperation between the school and the home thus being rather easy. And ninth, the teacher's work is somewhat successful, in view of his professional training.

The influence of the school on its students, however, fluctuates considerably, depending on various factors. Some of these are the following: First, the affiliation of the school is quite important; since a parochial institution, for instance, will place much more emphasis on religion than the public school system does. Second, the ecology of the institution is also influential, for a school located in a slum area will not function in the way those situated in suburban centres do. Third, the physical size of the school plays a significant role. Fourth, the size of the student body is very important, too. Fifth, the mobility of the student population constitutes an influential factor—the develop-

ment of a child constantly transferring from school to school will not be similar to that of another who receives his elementary education from one and the same institution. Sixth, the sex ratio of the school population has considerable effects on educational objectives. Seventh, the age composition of the student group is also influential—it is especially undesirable to mix very young children with much older ones. Finally, educational functions are affected substantially by the socio-economic status of the students.

3. MASS EDUCATION

Although mass education is a fairly recent phenomenon, some of the forces which have led to it are rather old. The following list includes the most important factors :

1. Protestantism, a religious movement initiated by Martin Luther, Haldreich Zwingli, John Knox, and John Calvin in the 16th century, being mainly an attempt to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church and the mediation of the clergy while emphasizing the autonomy of the person and his right to interpret the Bible individually, has undoubtedly been one of the primary forces that have made universal education popular.

2. The theory of environmentalism, which has been rather dominant in the United States, with its optimistic emphasis on the changeability of man, makes education an invaluable means of mankind's improvement.

3. Since the Jacksonian era, the American mind has tended to identify mass education with the democratic form of government, the educational rights of the individual thus being considered practically sacred.

4. The satisfactory function of a democratic government such as that of the United States presupposes educated citizens.

5. The vast federal bureaucracy, which has been constantly expanding, needs highly trained civic servants, if it is to function adequately. The rapid expansion of this colossus is indicated by the fact that, while in 1929 it employed 596,000 civilians, in 1952 this number grew to 2,612,000 ¹².

6. Rapid social change, which is typical of our era, necessitates constant efforts to adjust oneself to a partially but perpetually new environment. Such efforts are more successful among the educated.

7. The complexity of our society generates a constant demand

for highly specialized skills, which only formal education can create satisfactorily.

8. Extensive transportation and communication usually make people aware of the usefulness of education and, therefore, more willing to secure some sort of formal training.

9. The high level of living attained in the United States enables a higher percentage of people to attend school.

10. Since vertical social mobility of the ascending type is facilitated by formal education, the latter has become popular.

11. The transference of various functions from the home to the school makes formal education necessary for practically everyone — some of the education duties of the home in the past are indicated by an old Connecticut law according to which, the select men should see that no people «suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to endeavour to teach themselves or others, their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue»¹³.

12. Our society is organized in such a way that young people really have nothing else to do, school attendance thus being their main «occupation.»

13. Young people are now following occupation usually different from those of their parents, which makes instruction by the family impossible.

14. The emancipation of women has resulted in their need for economic security that may be achieved by acquiring secretarial and other skills.

15. Finally, the educational needs of millions of immigrants have contributed considerably to the acceptance of mass education 25 a primary American ideal.

4. SOME EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS

The emphasis placed by Americans on mass education as well as the total population increase and the stricter enforcement of laws requiring school attendance have caused a spectacular expansion of formal education.

In April 1947, for instance, 26,244,000 persons of 5–24 years of age were enrolled in various American schools. Less than 50 per cent of these, that is, 12,278,000, attended schools located in population centres of less than 2,500. The percentage of children attending school

had increased considerably between 1940 and 1947, especially in farm areas, namely from 55.7 to 61.3¹⁴. In the middle of the 20th century, according to the Statistical Abstract of the United States of 1952, there were 30,000,000 pupils and students in America. In October 1955, almost 37,500,000 Americans 5-34 years of age were attending various schools. Of these, 2,379,000 were enrolled in colleges and professional schools, 7,961,000 were high school students, and 27,086,000 attended elementary schools and kindergartens¹⁵.

In 1940, public day schools had 25,500,000 pupils, while 3,000,000 more were attending nonpublic elementary and secondary schools¹⁶.

In 1900, 500,000 students were enrolled in high schools, that is, 11 per cent of these of high school age, while the corresponding figures for 1940 were 7,000,000 and 73 per cent. The number of those who were graduated from high schools in 1890 was 43,731 (18,590 males and 25,182 females), and 1,199,700 (570,700 males and 629,000 females) in 1950¹⁷. In Michigan alone, the 1954-1955 enrollment in public junior and senior high schools was 450,000.

On the level of higher education there were 160,000 students in 1890, namely, 3 per cent of those of college age (18-21, inclusive). In the same year, 15,539 persons were graduated from college, 12,857 of these being males, and 2,682 females. In 1900, the number of college students was 250,000 or 4 per cent of those of college age. The corresponding figures for 1940, were 1,500,000 and 15 per cent, almost half this group consisting of women - there were no female college students in 1800. Partly due to Public Law 16 and Public Law 346 (education for veterans), in 1948 the number of college students was 2,500,000, of whom, 432,058 were graduated in 1950. Of the latter, 328,841 were males, and 103,217 females¹⁸.

In 1940 the law required children to attend school until they were 14-18 years old - the age limits varied from state to state. Furthermore, in 1943-1944, the length of the school years was 140-149.9 days in one state, 150-159.9 in two states, 160-169.9 in nine states 170-179.9 in 24 states, and 180 or more in the remaining 12 states. In the middle of the 20th century, according to the Statistical Abstract of the United States of 1952, there were 170,000 public schools, 13,000 private schools, and 600 public and 1,200 private colleges and universities. The number of elementary and secondary school teachers was 900,000 while that of college and university professors was 200,000. Finally, the annual expense for education was about 8,000,000,000 dollars.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the rate of illiteracy - inability to

read and write — among those aged 15 or more in the United States was 6,5 per cent in 1920, and only 2.7 per cent in 1947¹⁹.

5. EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

Educational reformers, from Plato to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, have conceived of the school as a microcosm on the basis of which a utopian macrocosm — a perfect society — may be created. This revolutionary approach is seen, for instance, in Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*. Emile Durkheim, however, a French Jewish sociologist born at Epinal in 1858, considered the school in a way diametrically opposed to that of the educational reformers²⁰. To him, it is the microcosm that follows the social macrocosm; the school merely serves society by socializing its young members, namely, by including them to adopt various social norms.

Both of these theories as well as the previous sections of the present article clearly demonstrate the close relationship between the school and society. Education itself is a social process, the school being a social institution. Furthermore, the child's personality is always influenced by the folkways and mores of the surrounding society and by his social interaction with other human beings at school. It is unfortunate, therefore that sociology, which is the scientific study of group relations, has only recently begun to contribute to the understanding of educational phenomena. This service has been rendered by one of its branches known as educational sociology, which is the scientific study of education as a social process. Before this field was developed, education, influenced by biology and, especially, by educational psychology and child psychology, emphasized individual phenomena. Educational sociology has thus filled a wide gap by going beyond the individual and by stressing group aspects.

Educational sociology²¹ was partially founded by Herbert Spencer and Lester F. Ward, who discussed some of the sociological aspects of education. Its real beginning, however, coincides with the publication of a pamphlet, in 1897, by the University of Chicago Press, which contained John Dewey's article, «My Pedagogic Creed», and Albion W. Small's «The Demands of Pedagogy on Sociology», both emphasizing the idea that the school is a social institution. Two years later, John Dewey published his *School and Society*, and S. T. Dutton his *Social Phases of Education in the School and the Home*. In 1908 appeared C. A. Scott's *Social Education*, in 1909 M. V. O'Shea's *So-*

cial Development and Education and in 1912 Irving King's Social Aspects of Education and G. H. Betts's Social Principles of Education. John Dewey further promoted educational sociology by publishing, in 1916 Democracy and Education, in which he conceived of education as a social process. This classic was followed by many important publications some of which are the following: Walter R. Smith, Introduction to Educational Sociology, 1917; Charles L. Robbins, The School as a Social Institution, 1918; Joseph K. Hart, Democracy in Education, 1918; William E. Chancellor, Educational Sociology, 1919; F. R. Clow, Sociology With Educational Applications, 1920; David Snedden, Sociological Determination of Objectives in Education, 1921, and Educational Sociology, 1922; Charles C. Peters, Foundations of Educational Sociology, 1924; Ernest R. Groves, Social Problems and Education, 1925; Alvin Good, Sociology and Education, 1926; Ross L. Finney, A Sociological Philosophy of Education, 1927; Walter R. Smith, Principles of Educational Sociology, 1927; E. George Payne, Principles of Educational Sociology, 1928; Joseph K. Hart, A Social Interpretation of Education, 1929; Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching, 1932; W. L. Warner et al., Who Shall Be Educated? 1944; Charles E. Johnson, Education and the Cultural Crisis, 1951; Baker Brownell, The College and the Community, 1952; Clyde B. Moore and William E. Cole, Sociology in Educational Practice, 1952; and Francis J. Brown, Educational Sociology, 1954.

Educational sociology was further promoted by the American Sociological Society which, at its 1923 annual meeting, organized the National Society for the Study of Educational Sociology. In 1928, this organization began to publish an annual Yearbook and the Journal of Educational Sociology.

Thus, the school's emphasis on individual phenomena was gradually reduced, while social aspects were given increasing consideration. It would not be unrealistic or too optimistic, therefore, to conclude that a change of this nature will greatly facilitate the achievement of the educational goals which we have described.

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