

**A SHORT HISTORY OF EDUCATION:  
BEING A REPRINT OF THE ARTICLE  
EDUCATION, FROM THE NINTH  
EDITION OF THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA  
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**W. H. PAYNE**

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EDUCATION.

From the ninth edition of the

ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.

EDITED,

With an Introduction, Bibliography, Notes  
and References,

BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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In this country, the purpose of normal instruction seems to be to prepare young men and women in the shortest and most direct way for doing school-room work. The equipment needed for this work is a knowledge of subjects and an empirical knowledge of methods; and so the normal schools furnish sound academic training, and pupils are taught methods of instruction by actual practice in experimental schools. In all this, the mechanical, or empirical, element seems to be held uppermost in thought. Pupils must be trained for practical ends; they must, so to speak, be converted into instruments for doing prescribed work by prescribed methods; and anything that promises to detract from their value as machines, must be

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studiously avoided. The artisan thus appears to be the ideal product of the normal school.

I do not presume to say that this conception of the purpose of normal instruction is wrong. I claim only the right to think and to say that I hold an essentially different view, and that I am attempting to give professional instruction to teachers on a totally different hypothesis. I believe that the great bar to educational progress is the mechanical teaching that is so prevalent, and that is so fostered and encouraged by normal schools. I believe that an intelligent scholar, furnished with a few clearly defined principles, and free to throw his own personality into his methods, is far more likely to grow into an accomplished teacher than one who goes to his work with the conviction that he must follow prescribed patterns, and has not that versatility that comes from an extension of his intellectual horizon. The value of a teacher depends upon his worth as a man, rather than upon his value as an instrument. Man becomes an instrument



only by losing worth as a man. In normal instruction there is need of greater faith in the potency of ideas, and less faith in the value of drill, imitation, and routine.

It is possible that in some grades of school work a purely mechanical teaching is best; that he is the best teacher who is most of an artisan,—with whom teaching is most of a handicraft. But I do not believe this. The rules that are best for working on wood and stone are not the best when applied to mind and character. Undoubtedly, there is a mechanical element in the teaching art; but this is subordinate to that other element that wholly escapes mechanical measurements, because it has to do with the manifestations of free spirit. In other words, I am persuaded that a teacher is poor to the degree in which he is an artisan, and good to the degree in which he is an artist; and that nothing is so much needed by teachers of every class as an infusion of that freedom and versatility that are possible only through an extension of the mental vision by means of a more liberal culture.

While I may be wrong in the general hypothesis, I feel that I am right in the following particulars: There must be some teachers who are more than mere instruments, more than operatives, more than artisans; there must be some who can see processes as they are related to law,—who, while obedient to law, can throw their own personality into their methods and can make such adaptations of them as varying circumstances may demand. If most teachers are doomed to be the slaves of routine, there must be some who have the ability to create and to control. In a word, along with the great multitude of mere teachers, there must be a growing body of educators. I cannot but think that in every normal school there are men and women who would love to walk upon these heights, to breathe this freer air, and who would thus see in teaching a fair field for the exercise of their best gifts. The attention of such should be drawn somewhat away from the merely mechanical aspects of teaching, and fixed on those professional studies that will broaden the teacher's vision and give him

the consciousness of some degree of creative power. The studies I mean are EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE and EDUCATIONAL HISTORY.

It has been said that a teacher who is wholly ignorant of the history of education may still do excellent work in the school-room. This does not admit of the least doubt. It is also true that men attain long lives in complete ignorance of the laws of digestion, and that they become voters and office-holders while knowing nothing of their country's history; but it does not follow that physiology and history are needless studies. A fair knowledge of the history of one's own country is now thought to be an essential element in good citizenship; and I see no reason why a fair knowledge of the history of educational systems and doctrines should not form a very desirable element in a teacher's education. He may teach well without this knowledge; but having it, he will feel an inspiring sense of the nobility of his calling, will teach more intelligently, and will give a richer quality to his work.