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ECONOMY IN
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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WILLIAM F. RUSSELL

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Riverside Educational Monographs

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**ECONOMY IN
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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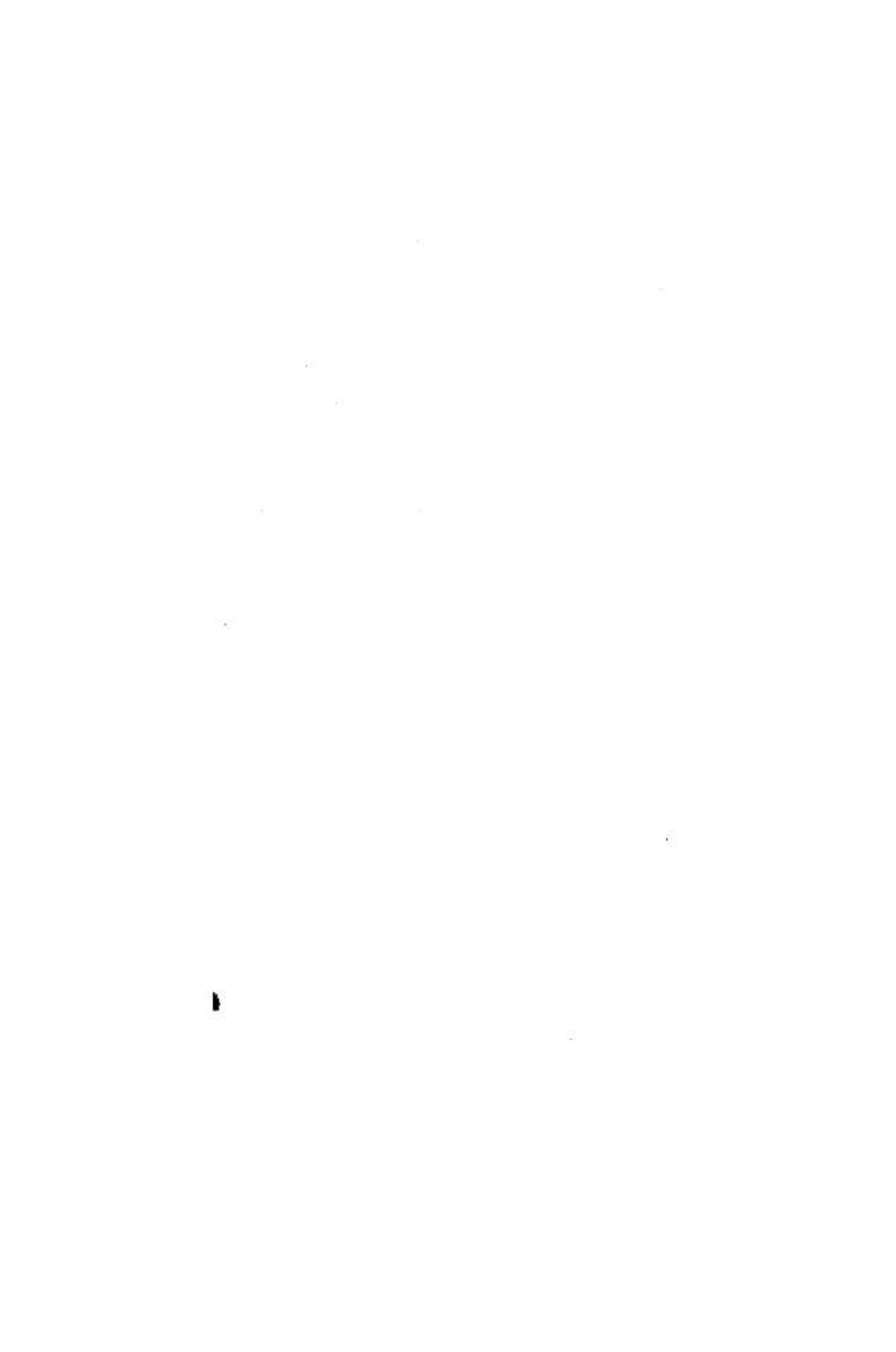
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE comparative study of educational efficiency is one of the most fruitful means of criticism at the disposal of the trained educator. That it has not been used adequately is due to our professional ignorance of contemporaneous educational practice. That it has not been used wisely is due to the fact that it has been most frequently employed by fascinated travelers rather than by trained thinkers.

The influence of foreign school systems on American educational practice has not been altogether fortunate. Too often we have been overzealous in the imitation of European methods. Differences of social aims and conditions have not been taken into account sufficiently. We have copied enthusiastically when we should have compared critically. The indictment does not fall on the worth of comparative education as a professional discipline; it is a reflection on the mental processes of those who have naively

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observed and loudly proclaimed the achievements of German, French, and English institutions.

The study which follows is a sample of discriminating judgment in estimating foreign and domestic practice in terms of relative worth. It is throughout sensitive to differences of national purpose and condition. It suggests with rare power of analysis what of European practice is applicable to a particular problem in American educational life, and does it with clear understanding of necessary modifications. It is a fine use of educational experience in the solution of current issues.

The difficulties of using educational experience, both contemporaneous and historic, should not deter us. In achieving true progress, that advance accompanied by the least waste effort, it is necessary to bring all available experience to bear. But the experiences of our historic and contemporaneous life never offer us direct prescriptions. They are somewhat stubborn in their yield of applicable truth. Success and failure are generally complex. A competent analytic mind must break them up into their constituent

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elements, and weigh the relative influence of each component factor. An efficient adaptive mind will then know which elements to omit or modify, and how to create a new synthesis suitable to American life.

In spite of a rapid introduction of the experimental method in education, it is probable that we shall likewise make an increasing use of comparative methods in the interpretation of our gross practical experience. There is a normality about our institutional adaptations, however defective they may be, which purely experimental work seldom possesses. /Experiment is artificial at best/ The conditions are prearranged to give ease of interpretation, but the experience itself is not so practical and wholesome. Our pragmatic, day-to-day adaptations presumably take into account all the factors, but we are baffled to know just how we get results. Here analysis and interpretation are exceedingly difficult. It seems then that the experimental and the comparative methods must be made supplementary means in the clarifying of educational theory and the improvement of teaching practice. One will be