

THE PROJECT METHOD IN EDUCATION

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The project method in education by Mendel E. Branom

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MENDEL E. BRANOM

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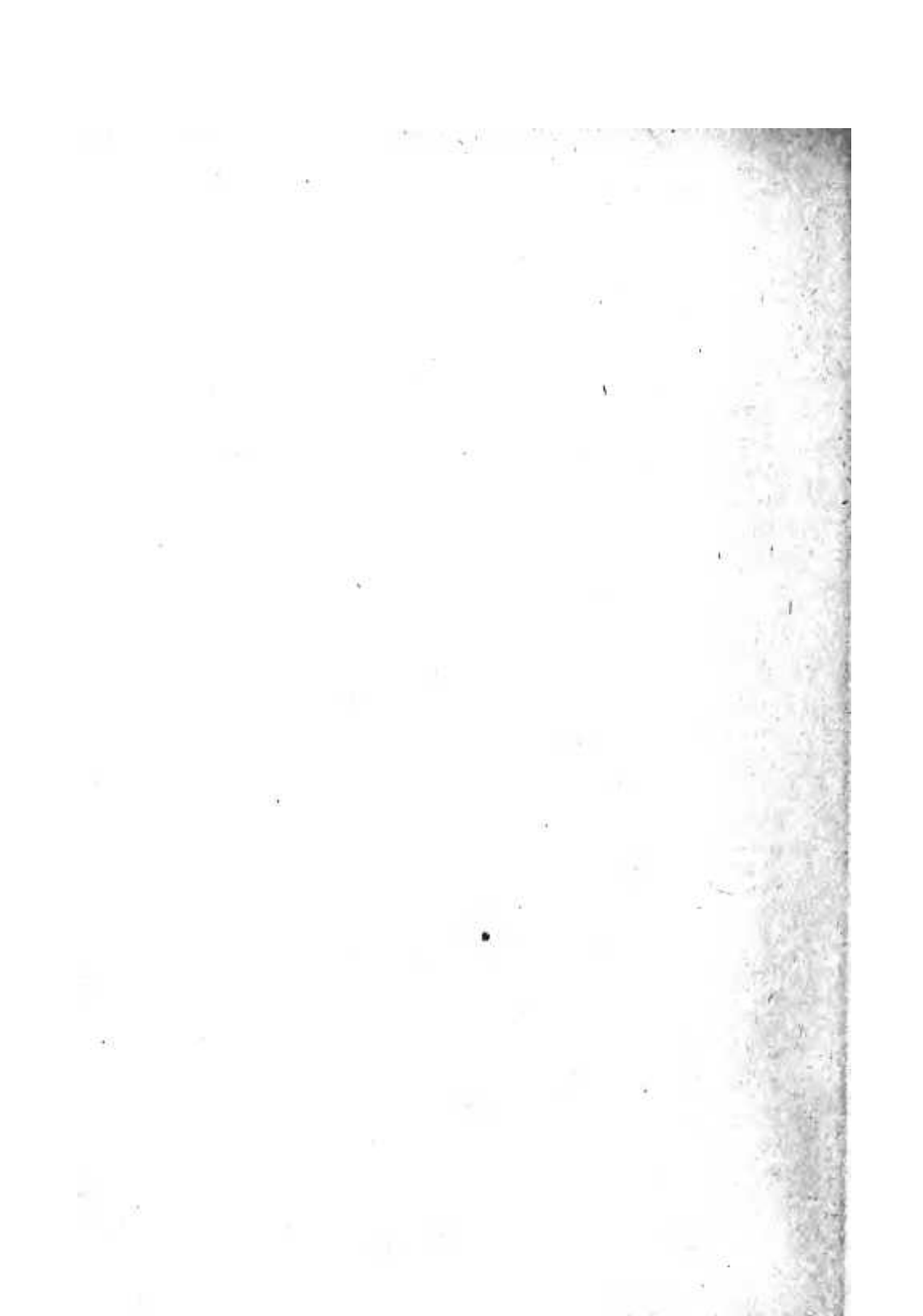
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E. GEORGE PAYNE
PRINCIPAL OF HARRIS TEACHERS COLLEGE
WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT HAS MADE
THE BOOK POSSIBLE



PREFACE

Modern education attempts to direct the child's development in such a way that the child will be a worthy participant of the institutional life of society; at the same time, an attempt is made to develop the particular abilities of each child, since institutional progress is dependent upon individual initiative. Rapid evolutionary changes in society have emphasized the need of reevaluating and of reorganizing subject matter.

During the World War the children of the schools were called upon to assist in numerous ways. An unusual opportunity was presented of motivating the school work through out-of-school activities. The effects were no less marked upon the teachers than upon the pupils. They were inspired by the field of usefulness that was opened to them. Teachers, everywhere, now that the war is ended, are not satisfied to go back to the bookish, theoretical education of former days, but there is considerable uncertainty as to how the work can be motivated through the out-of-school activities of ordinary times. Other institutions, during the war, needed the cooperation of the schools; the schools now keenly need the assistance of other institutions. The problem can be solved if teachers will make use of the various activities and materials of society. The chasm that has encircled the school, separating it from out-of-school activities, forever should be blotted out. The teacher needs to be a practical man or woman, who can make use of the present in educating the child. The requirements are much

more exacting, but the recognition is correspondingly greater.

In an effort to relate the world's work to the child's interests and abilities, teachers of the manual arts have organized their work about situations, the manual efforts involved looking toward the completion of a particular unit of activity, which, to the child, has some value that makes the work meaningful. A project in agriculture may involve the care of a garden; a project in manual training may involve the construction of a chair. It is natural that the term, project, should be applied to this unit of activity that results in concrete, objective achievement. Because of the rather aimless, colorless, theoretical, impractical way that such subjects as history and geography have been handled, it has not been clear that projects likewise were involved. The manual projects were concerned with the refashioning of materials of the present. The "bookish" subjects may be concerned with the activities of any time and of any place, and may be any number of steps removed from real, virile twentieth century living. The real nature of mental activities, apart from manual activities, therefore, is obscured. For concrete materials, man may substitute imagery, and without engaging in manual activity, may "think through" a complete unit of purposeful activity, the result of which is fundamental in influencing behavior. Such a unit is as characteristically a project as the manual unit.

All educative effort, worthy of the name, affects behavior. An intellectualized, purposeful unit of activity is a project. All intellectualized work of the school definitely must be related to some project. The more effectively the material is selected and organized, the more economically will the development of the individual proceed. An efficient use of the project method requires that the materials shall be or-