

**INDUSTRIAL
EDUCATION IN THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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Industrial Education in the Elementary School by Percival Richard Cole

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P. R. C.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA,
May, 1914.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE history of the teaching of manual training is one of the most interesting chapters in the evolution of the elementary school. Manual work was introduced into the curriculum at the beginning of the present period of educational unrest; and, because it had no fixed traditions to hamper its progress, responded most fully to modern educational principles.

When manual training was inaugurated in our schools, the public supposed it was to serve a practical industrial purpose; but the laity had not reckoned with the schoolmaster and school tradition. The teacher proceeded to make manual work a mental discipline rather than a practical utility, — a fallacious distinction long held by his craft. The new study was made into a set of formal exercises, rather than a group of interesting problems. The chief emphasis was laid on the practice of technique. The need of the child to express himself in manual activities that fulfill his desires was completely subordinated if not overlooked. What was worse, — the techniques

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

were studied in isolation, that is, apart from the personal or social situations which call for their use.

Thus, in the earliest days of this movement, the pupil was taught to make a half-dozen different kinds of saw cuts. The purpose was not to construct anything with the pieces thus sawed; but merely to get technical efficiency. The exercises were not graded so as to give the child power to build some simple, useful object, in which the skills learned might be employed. They were ordered so as to constitute a series of complicated technical skills, the uses of which even the teacher did not always foresee. The training given had little relation to the child's need to understand, solve, and express his own experiences and needs through the use of the hands.

Any one who had heard children rendering scales and other vocal exercises in the music period, or seen children studying diacritics and phonetics in the reading class, or watched them dissecting sentences into clauses, phrases, and parts of speech in language instruction, can readily understand what had happened to the new study of manual training. It had fallen a victim to pedagogical formalism. The subject had been wrenched out of all relation to the