

**THE EDUCATION OF TO-
MORROW, THE ADAPTATION
OF SCHOOL CURRICULA TO
ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY**

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The education of to-morrow, the adaptation of school curricula to economic democracy by
Arland D. Weeks

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THE EDUCATION OF TO-MORROW

*The Adaptation of School Curricula to
Economic Democracy*

BY

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INTRODUCTION

ONE in touch with educational thought to-day in any progressive country realises that there is great diversity of opinion regarding the value of the work now being done in the schools. During the past ten years the present writer, in the discharge of certain special duties, has found it necessary to read many hundreds of editorials in the leading newspapers at home and abroad regarding contemporary educational practices. While in many cases there has been hearty praise of both the curriculum and the methods in the schools of to-day, yet the deepest impression made by the reading of these editorials has been that there is widespread popular discontent with educational institutions as they are now conducted. The expression of dissatisfaction seems to be more open and aggressive in America and in England than elsewhere; but even in Germany, whose school system has of late been held up to the world as a model, there is developing a vigorous opposition to the traditional régime, in respect

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alike to studies and to the methods of presenting them.

In our own country, there are many who feel that the whole educational system has lost its anchor, and is drifting upon stormy seas. It is freely claimed by these critics that pupils do not come from the schools to-day as well trained for practical life as were the pupils of half a century ago, when teaching was a more or less haphazard undertaking. It is said that graduates of the elementary and the high school are in these times ill-prepared for responsibilities of any sort. It is the usual thing to read editorials charging that boys and girls with their diplomas are as a rule inaccurate in tasks requiring precision in thought and action; and they are said not to be methodical, or faithful, or independent, or effective in any useful activity. In short, they are not fitted for the needs of every-day life.

The schools are condemned again because, as it is claimed, they have introduced subjects which have only temporary, and perhaps little more than sentimental, value. Without attempting here to be mathematically precise, it may be said that there is published in every city in this country one or more newspapers which are continually attacking the schools on

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account of the "fads" and the "frills" which, it is claimed, are being given more attention than the "substantials" in education. One who will take the trouble so to do may in the course of a few weeks read hundreds of editorials upon the "degeneracy" of the elementary schools, since, according to the critics, they have abandoned the thorough teaching of arithmetic, reading, writing, and spelling, and are wasting their energies largely upon the teaching of music, drawing, nature study, history, literature, manual training, and domestic science.

The gradual spread of the elective system in the high schools, colleges, and universities has drawn from a considerable part of the press of this country a spirited and continuous warfare, while it has at the same time won warm support from the majority, perhaps, of our people. The almost complete disappearance of Greek, and the gradual elimination of Latin from the high schools, especially in the states west of the Ohio River, are apparently distressing to many persons, if their views are correctly presented through the editorial utterances of the daily press and the magazines. It is urged by some that modern studies,—as history, English literature, French, German, com-

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merce, science, industrial subjects and the like, —cannot “strengthen” the “sinews of the mind” as can Latin and Greek. Then, too, there are still among us those devotees of ancient culture, who feel that modern civilisation is crude and materialistic compared with the glorious civilisation of ancient Greece and Rome; and one whose mental life is not moulded on the Greek and Roman models cannot be said to be educated in the true sense.

The distress of the idealists is revealed in a recent expression of a prominent editor, who claims that “educational science regards the development of the inner life as the true course, and yet it is almost entirely neglected in both common school and college. A material education is the one sought, and though this is against all philosophy, it is kept up by the clatter and clamour of the world’s perverted ideals. The energy of the school’s purpose is diverted almost wholly to how to make a living, while how to live, which is the greatest quest, is quite neglected.”

The present-day school finds itself between Scylla and Charybdis. Not only is it denounced by those who regard contemporary civilisation as degenerate,—as tending toward the exaltation of what is materialistic and sensuous; it is

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attacked with equal ardour and earnestness by those who feel that it is lagging behind in the progress of civilisation. A considerable proportion of the more important and influential newspapers in this country—those which probably reflect prevailing opinion most accurately—are constantly saying that the school as it exists among us is not fully adapted to the needs of the times. It is teaching topics which, if they ever had value, have ceased to possess it to any extent, because of the changed conditions in contemporary life. Men everywhere are urging the schools to free themselves from the shackles of tradition, and teach the young those things which will interpret modern life for them, and give them power to put their interpretations into practical operation for their own good and that of their fellows. For instance, teachers are being advised to cease teaching mere exercise problems in arithmetic, and to put in their place problems that relate directly to modern commercial, industrial, agricultural, and urban life. Let arithmetic, they say, be curtailed so that room may be made for studies that deal with important matters, as sanitation, nutrition, common diseases, home-making, plant and animal life, city and town government, the methods of corporations, the