

**A PRIMER OF GENERAL METHOD :
BEING AN INTRODUCTION TO
EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND
PRACTICE ON THE BASIS OF LOGIC,
FOR USE IN NORMAL SCHOOLS**

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A primer of general method : being an introduction to educational theory and practice on the basis of logic, for use in normal schools by Sidney Edward Lang

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SIDNEY EDWARD LANG

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
A PRIMER

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*AN INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND
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FOR USE IN NORMAL SCHOOLS

BY

SIDNEY EDWARD LANG

PROVINCIAL NORMAL SCHOOL
WINNIPEG, CANADA

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PREFACE.

Educational science must seek for materials in many fields. The purpose here is to point out certain considerations drawn from the study of Logic which have a direct bearing upon educational theory and practice.

Psychology is almost invariably given a place on programmes for the training of teachers. It deals, however, with mental life in its structural aspects chiefly ; and the educator cannot afford to omit or postpone the study of the functional side of mind. He is vitally interested in problems relating to the **value** or **validity** of cognitive processes which psychology aims simply to describe. He must enquire into the **value** of feeling as well as into its various forms. He cannot be satisfied with a mere description of volitional experience, but desires to go forward to a **valuation** of conduct. The three closely connected fields of logic, aesthetics, and ethics thus lie alongside that of psychology in a complementary relation which cannot be ignored in a programme of studies for Normal Schools.

Indeed, the beginner in educational science might far more easily dispense with Psychology than with Logic. In dealing with psychological abstractions, there is considerable danger of confusion on account of the com-

plexity of the matter when he attempts to analyze it into its structural "elements," and these are of less practical consequence than the behaviour of the concrete personality with whom he has to do. Logic, on the other hand, is a kind of mental physiology. It deals with the mind as performing certain acts with a purpose in view—the good of the organism—and compels the student to take a practical and objective view of the case.

The point of view in what follows is that knowledge is for action—that the method of knowledge has always been determined by practical considerations.

Setting out from the idea of the relativity of knowledge, much emphasis is laid on the conception of System, a highly convenient and adaptable working-tool for the teacher. An attempt is made in the second part of the book to make clear the meaning of Inference. Some acquaintance with the nature of Inference is absolutely indispensable to the teacher, since knowledge is inferential throughout. A further analysis of the idea of System gives us an insight into the nature of the inferential element in thinking. In Part III the two kinds of Inference are compared and contrasted. Here, again, the concept of System proves adequate to the use to which it is put, as it shows clearly the points of similarity and of difference in inductive and deductive inference. The value to the teacher of an acquaintance with these two kinds of procedure is so obvious that it hardly needs to be urged.

The first three parts of the book deal with Logic pure and simple. But the student of Education investigates the subject for a very practical purpose. He "wants to know," for very substantial and particular reasons of his own. He is not averse to enjoying whatever "liberalizing" value the study may confer, but what leads him to spend time upon it is not a mere antiquarian curiosity concerning fine logical distinctions, but his belief that a knowledge of Logic will guide him in a practical way in the work of education.

It is the business of the teacher of Logic in a Normal School to keep this in mind, and to avoid in the presentation of the subject all barren conceptions, all unnecessary distinctions—all matter, in short, that cannot be turned to practical account. He must furnish the student-teacher with a good working idea of intelligence as a knowing function—the mind in actual operation in the interest of the human organism.

Logic, it ought to be added, cannot do more than furnish very general guidance to the educator. Anyone who expects that it can supply him with a full and complete assortment of tricks, devices, short cuts, royal roads to knowledge, by means of which he may be enabled to "surprise the souls of his pupils into the act of learning," can only meet with disappointment. Logic offers no encouragement to a faith of that kind, but simply undertakes to show how knowledge has been gained in carrying out the purposes of life. It seeks to exhibit

the methods which have been most successful in the long and arduous task of building together the various parts of our knowledge.

With these considerations in view, there are gathered together in Part IV some salient facts of Logic which are of special significance for the student of educational science, in that they bear directly upon the definition of education, on the problem of laying out a programme of studies, and on the educational value of work, play, and drudgery.

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