

**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
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ARLAND D. WEEKS

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CONTENTS

PART ONE

KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE USE OF INFORMATION	3
II THE PRODUCER'S KNOWLEDGE	9
III THE SCIENCE OF DISTRIBUTION	20
IV KNOWING HOW TO CONSUME	35

PART TWO

THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE

V THEY SAY	51
VI PRINTERS' INK	57
VII THE SPECIALIST	69
VIII THE FIRST TEACHER	78
IX OTHER AGENCIES	86
X THE SCHOOL	104

PART THREE

THE MAKING OF THE CURRICULUM

XI THE CURRICULUM AND DEMOCRACY	125
XII KNOWLEDGE VALUES	135
XIII SOME PLACES WHERE KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED	168
XIV A DEMOCRATISED CURRICULUM	202
XV IN CONCLUSION	217

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

PART ONE
KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Some considerations regarding the nature and function of knowledge, the main relations of life in which knowledge is of use, the agencies for the diffusion of knowledge, especially the school, and the conditions under which the movement for social welfare and democracy may be promoted through the curriculum are offered in the following pages.

THE EDUCATION OF TO-MORROW

I

THE USE OF INFORMATION

IMAGINE a person deprived of his stock of knowledge. His nature would propel him along purely instinctive lines, but in each situation in which he found himself he would suffer seriously for lack of consciousness of past experience. The instinct of sociability might draw him toward a fireside group, but he would know neither how to act with reference to others nor how to protect himself from the dangers of fire. Were he to cross a railroad track the instinct of curiosity would likely hold him on the rails till run down by the train. Deprived of his former experience with railroads and the knowledge gained from others' experience with railroads, our hypothetical person would no doubt fall an early victim to the dangers of the railroad crossing.

The Education of To-morrow

Similarly with a multitude of situations requiring adjustments on the part of the individual. The mental picture of a former situation and its results leads to the avoidance or the repetition of the original experience. The more knowledge one has of former experiences the better able is he to choose wisely among new situations that present themselves. Deprived of images, which are virtually a photographic collection for reference purposes, the individual would forever be debating the wisdom of alternatives and exposed at every turn to the disasters of unwise choices. No evolutionary attainment of the organism is comparable to the mental process which effects a restoration of the past for purposes of guidance as to future movements and decisions.

Knowledge enables one to meet the requirements of environment, while lack of it involves maladjustment entailing unnecessary friction, waste, loss and suffering and in extreme cases death. Knowledge vastly conserves effort and directs energies aright. Representing as it does the significant experience one himself has had as well as the experience of the race so far as assimilated through the processes of learning, one's knowledge saves from numberless hazards and points the way to economies and

The Use of Information

system in relation to environment. Knowledge sets the screws of adjustment, enabling the organism to accommodate itself to variations. It warns by citing appropriate examples from the past. Its function is to promote correspondence between organism and environment.

Since the function of knowledge is to articulate the individual with his environment, it is evident that what is valuable knowledge to one may be worthless knowledge to another, except so far as all individuals have needs in common. It will not do to pass upon this or that quantum of knowledge absolutely. The values of knowledge are ever relative to the individual himself.

The question of the functional value of knowledge is, then, largely a personal one. Is Greek a valuable knowledge? It was to individual Greeks in Greece. It is less so to the Greek in America who sells fruit to Americans. To the American? That depends. But the question must be discussed always with reference to particular individuals or classes having needs in common.

To evaluate knowledge for the individual requires acquaintance with the relations which he will sustain to his environment. What will he