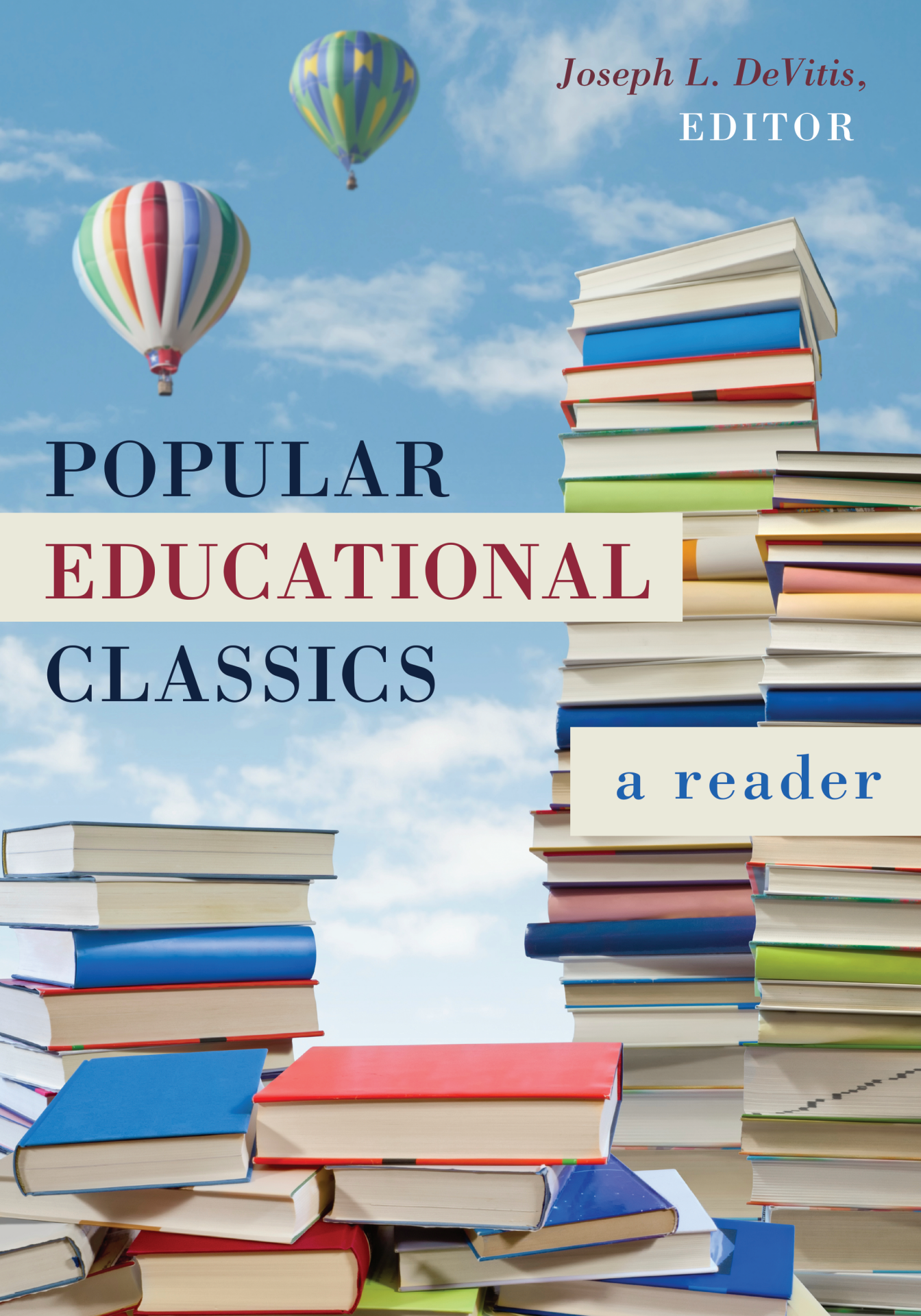




Joseph L. DeVitis,
EDITOR

POPULAR
EDUCATIONAL
CLASSICS

a reader

The last half century has created deep tensions in how we analyze educational and social change. Educators, policymakers, and concerned citizens have had to cope with competing belief systems in evaluating and acting upon school policies and practices. This illuminating book untangles many of the roots of those persistent debates that have divided the nation for so long. It offers readers a critical opportunity to reflect on our continuing ideological struggles by examining popular books that have made a difference in educational discourse.

Joseph L. DeVitis has specifically selected key books on social and educational controversies that speak to wide audiences. They frame contextual issues that so-called “school reformers” have often neglected—much to the detriment of any real educational progress. Ultimately, this text is meant to stir our consciences, to disorder our certainties, and to compel us to treat education and culture with both reason and passion. It is highly relevant for courses in social foundations of education, school reform, educational policy studies, philosophy of education, history of education, politics of education, curriculum studies, and teacher education.

“Popular Educational Classics offers readers a treasure trove of five decades of incisive thinking about many of education’s knottiest issues. I love the rich, accessible dialogue that emerges chapter after chapter between authors of enduring and provocative works, and authors who present and comment on them. Everyone who takes education seriously should engage with this volume.”

—Christine E. Sleeter, *Professor Emerita, School of Professional Studies,
California State University Monterey Bay*

“Organized chronologically, Joseph L. DeVitis’s edited collection takes readers through an engaging and thoughtful fifty-year tour of educational scholarship. For the previously initiated, it represents a path worth revisiting and re-engaging. For the novice, it depicts a rich and still powerful body of scholarly inquiry. We owe DeVitis and his crew our sincere thanks.”

—Daniel P. Liston, *Professor, School of Education, University of Colorado, Boulder*

Joseph L. DeVitis is a past president of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA), the Council of Learned Societies in Education, and the Society of Professors of Education. Two of his books have received Choice awards from the American Library Association and three have earned AESA Critics Choice awards as outstanding books of the year.

Popular Educational Classics

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Popular Educational Classics

A Reader

Edited by Joseph L. DeVitis



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Dedication

To *Joe R. Burnett*,

For his staunch sense of fairness and abiding faith in democracy and education

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Introduction

Joseph L. DeVitis

Popular Educational Classics: A Reader attempts to show how the last half century of school and society has dramatized deep tensions in how we analyze education and social change as students, teachers, administrators, scholars, policymakers, and concerned citizens. Competing belief systems have done battle with each other during the era covered in the text. One camp frames schooling within severe social constraints that need to be overcome—an ideology attuned to socially and politically progressive movements. The other, more conservative, perspective proposes educational policies and practices that move schools in a far different direction—one largely devoid of connection to wider social structures. That profound ideological struggle continues to this day. It is my hope that this book will be helpful in untangling the roots of the persistent debates that have divided the nation for so long. Moreover, my ultimate wish is to provide more clarity—and reflective action—on crucial public problems that have necessitated those heated conflicts. If we can make greater strides toward solving the “crisis in the classroom”—in fuller reality, the crisis in *society*—we will have better served our children and created a more humane community.

Some Stipulations and Caveats

This introduction will not discuss all 40 texts in the compendium. To do so would require a companion volume in itself, and my contributors have done exceptional work that I cannot improve upon. Instead, I will attempt to whet readers’ appetites for what I would characterize as a kind of liberal education in contemporary educational studies. Nor will there be any images of ancient Greek or Roman columns. I use the words “popular” and “classic” loosely and in tandem to signify books that have been emblematic and memorable in educational circles from the 1960s to the

present. It is no coincidence that the period chosen parallels my own journey as an educational theorist and practitioner. Indeed, I have assigned almost all of the books chosen for this volume in my college classes from 1969 to 2013. I have chosen them because they treat crucial questions in school and society in language and substance accessible not only to scholars but also to a wider public. I am less interested in undertaking an academic exercise than I am in motivating larger groups to seek educational change. Thus the book goes beyond rarefied jargon toward a more complete universe of discourse, policy, and practice. In a word, we need to augment our roles as public intellectuals who share knowledge and wisdom with a larger readership while foregoing any attempts to mystify, as if we were High Priests. To have a public, we must speak to its urgent interests by developing more generalizing vocabularies. Thus, for this compendium, I have purposely privileged books written by public intellectuals.

Similarly, I have largely excluded specific studies that speak in more specialist idioms and narratives or are solely rooted in earlier time periods. Many of the books chosen are indeed scholarly; all of them appeal to an extensive public rather than a small coterie of academic audiences. I want readers to *feel* the actual pulse and press of conflict in the particular decades represented in this book. Thus I have included only those works that deal, in whole or part, with the years under discussion. They are talked-about books that are read for what they offer for reform today and tomorrow, in and out of the classroom. In other words, they are socially and educationally relevant.

If we want to alter conditions in public schools and society, we will need to converse and act in more public terms. Armchair philosophizing will not be sufficient. A more concerted effort will be required to counter persistent posturing among politicians, policymakers, government officials, and even some school leaders who exert power over education. We should work with teachers to foster fuller control of their wider social, political, and economic destinies, including more substantial responsibility for participating in tough and tender dialogue and *action* on the contentious problems they face each and every day. I sincerely hope that the books in this text will aid in the struggle to actualize democratic schooling and a more democratic society. Granted, this will be extremely difficult in a culture of money, greed, power, and intensively lobbied laws and policies. The “haves” have been unwilling to give up even bird-like shares of what they hold, a sorry circumstance that leads seamlessly to the next section.

The books surveyed in this collection draw upon significant issues related to several interwoven themes: the critical impact of politics on education, the actual possibility of harm in schooling, and the search for meaning in education. Of course, none of those subjects can really be evaluated separately. This introduction recognizes that false dichotomy. I compose such a rhetorical structure to focus readers’ attention on key propositions that run throughout the book, whether distinctly articulated or implied.

Education Is Political

Readers will find that this text is strewn with outright and veiled *political* premises and assumptions. In some 40 years of teaching teachers, I have often been surprised after repeating the words, “Education is political.” That claim tends to draw some raised eyebrows, especially among undergraduates. It is a truism that is not always taken as a rule of the profession, especially among beginning teachers. Indeed, it is congruent with Dan C. Lortie’s findings in *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Inquiry* (1975) that teachers have traditionally tended to be

conservative culturally and politically. That circumstance was particularly the case during my years as a professor in the South. However, the National Education Association (NEA) has been credited with helping Jimmy Carter win the presidency in 1976 (the first time the NEA endorsed a national campaign). Carter came through on his promise to establish the federal Department of Education and appointed Ernest L. Boyer, who is discussed in this book, as the Commissioner of Education in 1977. Since then, both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the NEA have continued to be active in national, state, and local politics during decades of waning unionization.

It is wise to take care in analyzing political language about education and to be wary of sloganeering. Words such as “excellence,” “rigor,” “world class,” “No Child Left Behind,” “Race to the Top,” and the like are typically used to persuade when they more realistically proffer empty bromides and public relations offenses. Naturally, both rightist and leftist recommendations seek to win us over. No matter what one’s political viewpoints, education is too important to be left to undiscerning policymaking—a fact of life that, if ignored, has usually been harmful and sometimes ruinous.

Some strange stirrings occur when analyzing the politics of education. Throughout the period covered in this book, there has been a persisting struggle between the right and the left to draw rhetorical blood while zigzagging toward school reform. At times I have been compelled to admit that the right has spoken more directly and clearly to public audiences. (The political left could learn from the lucid speech of Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.) Meanwhile, the academic left has spoken too often in obtuse, esoteric forms and tones while ironically urging an awakening of the public through liberationist means. Less clouded communication would seem to offer a good start. Here is an admittedly extreme scholarly example of the opposite in *one* sentence:

A politics presuming the ontological indifference of all minority social identities as defining oppressed or dominated groups, a politics in which differences are sublimated in the constitution of a minority identity...can recover the differences between social identities only on the basis of common and therefore commensurable experiences of marginalization, which experiences in turn yield a political practice that consists largely of *affirming* the identities specific to those experiences. (Guillory, 1993, p. 12)

As we take a breath, we realize that the elephant in the schoolhouse has long been evident: education cannot really be transformed until our society has the courage and will to face poverty head-on. Ray Bradbury (1997), who knew how to separate social reality from science fiction, perhaps put it best: “Poverty made a sound like a wet cough in the shadows of the room” (p. 82). The right does not admit noticing the elephant’s walk, and the left does not appear to be adept at riding the animal more vigorously with wider publics. With any luck, maybe even Democrats will begin to mention “the poor,” and not just the middle class. Rather than skirting around the edges and often using public schools as scapegoats, we would gain more traction by attacking structural economic problems endemic to American society. Some of the writers in this book offer glimmers of hope in that they recognize poverty as *the* basic issue to be tackled. One need look no further than the career of Diane Ravitch (2000, 2010, 2013) to see that major reversals can occur. She spent several decades as a conservative critic of public schools but is now a vocal opponent of right-wing apostles who bash teachers, extol massive testing, and neglect the social, economic, and political condition of the poor:

The fact is that poverty does matter. No matter what standardized test you look at, the results portray the influence of socioeconomic status on test scores. Despite outliers, the kids with the most advantages are at the top, the kids with the fewest advantages are at the bottom. This is true of international tests, state tests, federal tests, the ACT, the SAT. Standardized tests are the means by which privilege is distributed. The outcomes are predictable. (Ravitch, 2014, p. 1)

In recent years, Ravitch has shed the thin cloak of such conservative concepts as “choice,” “vouchers,” “markets,” “deregulation,” and “privatization.” These are some of the same notions adopted by neoliberals who champion an individualistic culture that calls for cutbacks in basic human services and largely disavow communitarian concerns (Lipman, 2007). They prize an essentially corporate approach to public schooling; the public good seems to have escaped their attention. Conversely, Ravitch grants that she has studied the evidence anew and discarded many of her past allegiances. She would now doubtless concur with this characterization of a nation steeped in a present-day version of social Darwinism and a blame-the-victim mentality: “Obsessed with success and wealth and despising failure and poverty, our society is systematically dividing the population into winners and losers” (Taibbi, 2014, pp. 12–13).

For further examination of the consequences of politics in education, see additional books analyzed in this volume by the following: Raymond E. Callahan, Dan C. Lortie, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, Michael W. Apple, Henry A. Giroux, Peter McLaren, David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, Jean Anyon, John Ogbu, David Tyack and Larry Cuban, Richard Rothstein, Linda Darling-Hammond, David F. Labaree, and David L. Kirp.

Schools and Society *Can* Be Harmful

Yes, schooling can indeed be injurious to mind, body, and soul. That theme is at least as old as Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762), in which he proclaimed that human beings, by nature, are good but become corrupted by society. One of the foremost proponents of anti-schooling has been Ivan Illich, whose *Deschooling Society* (1971/2000) is reviewed in this collection. He argues that institutional structures—most assuredly including schools—bear the baggage of “hell paved with good intentions” in human lives. School personnel, Illich claims, transmit an oppressive culture of certainties, social expectations, myths of “progress,” and false hope to students (especially those in depressed circumstances). Furthermore, compulsory schooling compels them (particularly those in the middle class and above) to accept societal adjustment to ever-growing patterns of consumption. In Illich’s view, schooling tames our freer spirit, calcifying our “habits of the heart.”

Other writers, such as Jonathan Kozol in *Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools* (1991), have grittily described the noxious conditions in which many urban school districts are forced to struggle and cope. They are often left behind to deal with decaying walls, raw sewage, poisonous drinking water, and the like. Their students are packed like sardines into ramshackle structures, and teachers are hard to find because of gross underfunding. The per capita funding for these districts, as compared to their more affluent suburban neighbors, should make us cringe about the inequalities between rich and poor in the world’s richest nation:

We are children only once; and after those years are gone, there is no second chance to make amends. In this respect, the consequences of unequal education have a terrible finality.... The

winners in this race *feel* meritorious. Since they also are, in large part, those who govern the discussion of this issue, they are not disposed to cast a cloud upon the means of their ascent. (Kozol, 1991, p. 217)

(It should be noted that Kozol's narrative is a prime example of how the themes in this book are often interrelated. His work is, of course, highly influenced by the effects of social reproduction and the politics of education in sustaining inequality.)

More recently, Kenneth Teitelbaum (2013) has hammered home a similar message:

Maybe we would be better off spending less money on improving standards and accountability and more on the underlying conditions that adversely affect learning, including the fact that one in five children in this country come from families in poverty, an increase of 40 percent in the last decade. Some of these children are literally traumatized by the stresses they face and yet are expected to learn the same curriculum and pass the same state exams as children from wealthy families. (Teitelbaum, 2013, p. 2)

In fact, a 2015 report by the Children's Defense Fund (Giannarelli, Lippold, Minton, & Wheaton) shows that our society has not mustered the political will to rightfully be called a caring nation: if the United States authorized an extra 2% of its budget to raise employment, produce viable jobs, and provide for children's vital needs, it would reduce child poverty by 60%. If such fervent and rational critiques are taken seriously, decent men and women—especially politicians, policymakers, and educators among them—should be ashamed and enraged. Yet the elephant still sits at the classroom door, and it has not moved since Kozol wrote his challenging book. It has actually become more elephantine.

The theme of “schooling can be harmful” is also discussed in other books in this text by Paul Goodman, Herbert Kohl, Jeannie Oakes, Michelle Fine, Lisa Delpit, and Alfie Kohn.

Education *Should Be* Meaningful

A number of the authors in this volume speak to the quest for meaning through education. The philosopher Nel Noddings (1992) applies moral education to actualize “attitudes and skills required to sustain caring relations and the desire to do so” among students and teachers in *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (1992). She incorporates concerns for humane pedagogical dispositions, classroom environment, and careful curriculum planning. Teachers should motivate through dialogue, modeling, and “confirmation” (affirming pupils' distinctive strengths) and ask them overarching questions about themselves and the world around them:

Who am I? What sort of person should I be? What is my place in the universe? How should I treat other human beings?... How shall I make a living? What do I owe nonhuman animals? Are there objects I should cherish? What does it mean to be a parent, friend, or citizen in today's world? (Noddings, 1992, pp. xxiii–xxiv)

And no one combines critical pedagogy and existential yearning for meaning more exquisitely than Maxine Greene in *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988). Her notion of freedom is “the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be” (p. 3). She *does* recognize that freedom is not easily won; oppressive cultural and social walls block fuller human

fulfillment in all ages. Yet Greene beseeches teachers to provoke students to the point that they “reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions” in an often senseless world (p. 14). Citing, among others, Fyodor Dostoevsky, John-Paul Sartre, and John Dewey throughout her masterful work, she pushes each of us to believe that meaning can be created in our individual lives and in concert with other human beings. With needed persistence, Greene prods us “to break with the ‘cotton wool’ of habit, of mere routine...to seek alternative ways of being, to look for openings...to discover new possibilities” (p. 2).

Other authors of books in this anthology offer diverse perspectives on the creation of meaning in education: Jerome S. Bruner, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Charles E. Silberman, John I. Goodlad, Mortimer J. Adler, Ernest L. Boyer, Theodore R.Sizer, E.D. Hirsch, Jane Roland Martin, Gloria Ladson-Billings, C.A. Bowers, and Yong Zhao.

In closing, it is my profound hope that readers will find either new or renewed ways of viewing schools and society through deep reflection on all these books. They are meant to stir our consciences, to disorder our certainties, and to force us to treat education and culture with both reason and passion. None of our authors or contributors writes from canned scripts or required rubrics. Each *does* write so that education and its world can still be sustained—and made better—throughout and beyond our current struggles.

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| PART ONE

The 1960s

| ONE

Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (1960)

Timothy Glander

Jerome Bruner's classic 1960 text, *The Process of Education*, pivots on the now well-known aphorism: "...any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development."¹ Simple, elegant, profound: as a hypothesis it would remain largely untestable empirically. (Just what, exactly, would intellectual honesty mean here?) Nevertheless, as commonsense understanding, or perhaps as wishful thinking, the axiom resonated with readers in the early 1960s who felt the full brunt of the social alienation and intellectual fragmentation of the age and longed to find some structural coherence and unity between the learner and the world.

An early reviewer gushed about Bruner's book: "There are some rare and wondrous occasions in reading when one has a tremendous sense of the presence of power, the feeling that there is some very special significance in the pages. The book that calls forth such a response is not always a great or near perfect work, but in it something has been said in such a way that for you, some views of the world will never quite be the same."² Even the always critical, and usually prescient, Paul Goodman could not subdue his enthusiasm for the book: "In my opinion it will be a classic, comparable for its philosophical centrality and humane concreteness to some of the essays of Dewey."³ Goodman went on to identify that Bruner's main goal was "to develop not test-passers and technicians, but discovers and inventors," and he accurately noted that Bruner did so by laying "stress on heuristic principles, on the encouragement of intuition, on adaptation to the child's developing world, on the importance of initiative, fantasy, and practical experience of the subject matter." For Goodman, Bruner's book embodied the best part of the humanist tradition, and whether he "knew it or not," Bruner was "breathing the spirit of Mary Boole, (Alfred North) Whitehead, and classical progressive education."⁴

Goodman was right. *The Process of Education* made a compelling argument, yet for all its profound insight, it offered little that was strikingly new or novel in thinking about education. The

book restates questions that have perennially framed educational theory and responds with proposals that are highly reflective of the constellation of progressive educational ideas that we associate with John Dewey from earlier in the twentieth century.⁵ Like Dewey, Bruner placed primacy on the role of the child as engaged in a meaningful encounter with the world. In so doing, he offered a perspective on teaching and learning that was sharply at odds with the prevailing didactic and conformist style of most American schooling then and now. Written in a highly engaging manner, and cast as an expression of a new cognitive science, the book quickly caught fire for Harvard University Press, selling 83,000 copies in its first edition and launching a major school reform movement, the effects of which still linger with us.⁶

Strangely, however, Bruner did not reference Dewey and progressive education at all in his text, nor did he express any understanding of how his proposal fit within the context of educational history.⁷ His approach was largely ahistorical, and the upshot was that he and his collaborators were presenting something new and fresh and potentially revolutionary. While this may have been in part a consequence of Bruner's ignorance of educational history (a deficit he acknowledged in later years), a more probable explanation is that any demonstrable congruence with Dewey and progressive education would have been a difficult sell from a public relations standpoint.⁸ The Progressive Education Association had been dissolved by 1955, and in 1961 Lawrence Cremin published his widely read postmortem on progressive education, *The Transformation of the School*.⁹ What had been labeled and caricatured as "progressive education," including John Dewey's work in particular, came to be viewed in the 1950s as the source for much that was wrong with American education by an increasingly vocal group of mostly right-wing critics. Any direct or indirect association of his ideas to John Dewey would not have been in Bruner's political or professional interests—nor, for that matter, would it help to advance the larger political agenda of those who funded Bruner's work. Thus, one way to read *The Process of Education* is as an advocacy for the continuation of some of the best of Dewey's progressive educational ideas, but one safely shielded from the image of the bogeyman that Dewey and progressive education had come to possess.¹⁰

Yet another way to read the book is as a carefully crafted proposal for further educational research funding from the nexus of military institutions, national security agencies, and corporate foundations dominant during the Cold War. By one count, Bruner makes no fewer than thirty-one appeals to support further specific research questions generated in his text. Again, it is not surprising that, in making his case for further funding, Bruner would distance himself from Dewey, whose social and economic views were regarded as quite radical by 1950s standards. Moreover, Dewey's democratic ethos was seen as subversive and dangerous to the Cold War ideologues who, through the distribution of research monies, set the social science research agendas of the time.

If the strength of *The Process of Education* can be found in its unacknowledged fidelity to some of Dewey's key progressive educational ideas, the book's shortcomings can be found in its failure to consider and extend other key aspects of Dewey's educational philosophy. I am referring here primarily to Dewey's emphasis on the critical examination of educational aims and social purposes, as well as his democratic orientation, which emphasizes the teacher's creative role in "psychologizing" the curriculum. The top-down approach of Bruner's book abjures these Deweyan themes and is weaker as a result. This chapter will further consider Bruner's book and explore some of the reasons for, and some of the consequences of, these omissions.

II

The Process of Education was the outgrowth of the now-famous conference at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, in September 1959. There gathered, wrote Bruner, “some thirty-five scientists, scholars, and educators to discuss how education in science might be improved in our primary and secondary schools.”¹¹ The participants reflected a largely homogeneous group, as most of them were drawn from large U.S. research universities, and most reflected training in mathematics, the physical sciences, and psychology, although two historians and a classicist also joined the group. Bärbel Inhelder, Jean Piaget’s collaborator from the University of Geneva, was the lone woman in the group and represented its only international perspective. Bruner served as chair of the conference and prepared the chairman’s report, which was published as *The Process of Education*.

There should be no doubt, however, that the educational ideas expressed in the text were essentially Bruner’s. While all the participants were encouraged to provide critique and comment on the draft report, Bruner wrote in his preface that he made “no effort...to reach a consensus of the Conference as a whole.”¹² Several participants were apparently offended by what they regarded as Bruner’s autocratic approach. “I had thought, incorrectly,” wrote one participant, “that *The Process of Education* was a report of work done collectively by a group of people thinking collectively.... But now I read Dr. Bruner’s book five years later, I see how much of the pattern was really his own.” Another participant was even more dismayed: “It seems to me that Dr. Bruner ignored the opinions of almost everyone at the conference.... [H]e gave us the ‘back of his hand’ by emasculating what we had worked so hard to draft.”¹³

Despite these objections to the final narrative, it is clear that the work emerged most distinctively from the Cold War context of the time and that the Woods Hole participants shared deeply held beliefs about the national security value of their work. The participants were responding to what they envisioned “to be a long term crisis in national security,” itself a consequence of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) manpower studies that imagined the United States to be falling behind the Soviet Union in the creation of scientists and engineers with expertise in weapons development. The conference was funded by interconnected foundations and agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the Rand Corporation, the United States Air Force, and others, which were primarily motivated by war-related values.

Many of the conference participants, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology physicist and conference organizer Jerrold Zacharias, had cut their teeth doing such work during World War II and had made their professional careers engaged in highly classified research for the national security apparatus during the Cold War. What emerged from the Woods Hole Conference, argues historian Ronald W. Evans, “was a manufactured consensus, paid for by stakeholders with an interest in education conducted on behalf of national security. It was a direct outgrowth of the cold war, and of persistent attacks on progressive education. As such, it represented the United States of America, or at least a significant selection of its national intellectual leadership, in concerted action against progressive education.”¹⁴

The Process of Education should also be seen as an early iteration of the enduring national obsession with the so-called STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) disciplines. It represented a manifestation of “Big Science,” a model for scientific inquiry that grew out of large-scale, war-related projects developed during World War II.¹⁵ And it advanced an

ideological orientation to science that emphasized an accumulative and centralizing view of knowledge in the hands of experts, driven by the values of efficiency and control. The military culture in which the work was embedded was decidedly undemocratic, and the abounding Cold War fears and surveillance forced constraint and conformity on the activity of science that, by its very nature, requires openness and independence.

Social and educational research during this period was treated with suspicion, seen as “unscientific,” or both. Many social and educational researchers attempted to ape the approach of the dominant physical sciences in an effort to secure funding from the interlocking national security agencies and corporate foundations.¹⁶ By mid-century most social and educational research had gravitated toward a narrow scientism that relied on quantitative analysis and rejected normative, interpretive, and critical perspectives. Had Bruner’s book simply echoed this prevalent scientism, it would have drawn little attention, would have done little to solidify and advance the enduring national mantra for the STEM disciplines, and would have been quickly forgotten. Instead, bolstered by the cadre of physicists and mathematicians who participated in the conference, whose scientific stature tacitly legitimated the conference proceedings and whose Cold War credentials provided appropriate cover, Bruner was free to craft a provocative narrative that engaged the imagination of the general reader even as it stayed within the undemocratic boundaries of the Cold War culture.

It is important to note here that Bruner mastered this kind of sleight of hand through his own war-related work before, during, and after World War II. Bruner was—to use the most accurate descriptor—a propagandist. He was among those social scientists in the first half of the twentieth century whose scholarly interests in understanding opinion management dovetailed with the interests of a corporate-military state seeking to fund and apply such understanding to shaping the opinions of an emerging mass society.¹⁷ Even before the outbreak of World War II, Bruner was involved in propaganda-related work, writing his dissertation at Harvard on “A Psychological Analysis of International Radio Broadcasts of Belligerent Nations” and working at state-sponsored foreign-broadcast monitoring services, first at Princeton in 1940 and then in Washington, D.C., in 1941.¹⁸ By 1942 Bruner had shifted his attention to a study of domestic opinions through the Office of Facts and Figures, the organizational precursor to the Office of War Information. Working for the U.S. wartime propaganda agency, he wrote his first book, *The Mandate from the People*, on domestic wartime public opinion.¹⁹ From there he continued to engage in propaganda-related work for the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD-SHAEF) in England and France during the war. In the postwar period Bruner remained a highly sought-after expert on propaganda matters, participating in such programs of Cold War opinion management as the highly classified Project Troy study and the CIA’s Center for International Studies (CENIS) at MIT, among other related activities in the 1950s.²⁰ While the full story of Bruner’s propaganda work with these and other agencies has yet to be told, it is clear that such work occupied much of his focus throughout at least the 1940s and 1950s; and this experience would have—at the very least—shaped his thinking about the need for opinion management as a necessary ingredient of educational policy formation and implementation. As he sat down with the Woods Hole Conference notes to write his first book on educational theory, crafting a message that would positively resonate with key segments of American public opinion would have likely been foremost on his mind.

III

And what a carefully crafted and marvelous message *The Process of Education* would turn out to be. Only 92 pages in length, Bruner's book consists of an introduction and five thematic chapters, reflecting many Deweyan progressive educational ideas, while still subtly advancing Cold War educational aims: The Importance of Structure, Readiness for Learning, Intuitive and Analytic Thinking, Motives for Learning, and Aids to Teaching. In "Chapter 1 – Introduction" and "Chapter 2 – The Importance of Structure," Bruner insightfully explores the important role of understanding the underlying structure and fundamental principles of disciplinary knowledge. All subject matter possesses a coherent and identifiable structure, according to Bruner. This structure can, and should, make up the centerpiece of the curriculum and the primary focus of instruction. The teaching of specific skills and topics should be regarded as secondary and subordinate to the teaching of this underlying structure. Such an understanding of underlying structure makes it easier for students to relate what is learned to other learning experiences. "Grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully," according to Bruner. "To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related."²¹ Without such an understanding, Bruner argues, knowledge is inefficient to convey and difficult to remember. Finally, and most importantly, understanding the inherent structure of a discipline makes the learning meaningful, generates intellectual excitement, and compels further learning. In a passage that sounds almost as if it were lifted directly from John Dewey, Bruner writes: "The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred."²²

In "Chapter 3 – Readiness for Learning," Bruner considers this inherent structure in relation to the Piagetian stages of cognitive development. He argues for the readiness of elementary school-aged children to access this structural knowledge in ways that are in keeping with their developmental stage, and makes the case for the now-famous "spiral curriculum." His primary focus is on learning in the so-called concrete operations stage, roughly the beginning school-age years of about five or six, until the child passes into the formal operations stage between ten and fourteen years of age. Bruner suggests that giving children access to structural knowledge during the concrete operations stage will facilitate future learning and make it occur more efficiently and more deeply during later stages of cognitive development. He contends that during the concrete operations stage children are able to use symbolic representations of reality in the service of solving problems, and they are able to understand structural relationships provided that they are exposed to them in ways that are commensurate with their way of seeing the world. Again sounding much like Dewey, Bruner writes: "What is most important for teaching basic concepts is that the child be helped to pass progressively from concrete thinking to the utilization of more conceptually adequate modes of thought. But it is futile to attempt this by presenting formal explanations based on a logic that is distant from the child's manner of thinking and sterile in its implications for him. Much teaching in mathematics is of this sort. The child learns not to understand mathematical order, but rather to apply certain devices, or recipes, without understanding their significance and connectedness. They are not translated into his way of thinking."²³ When learning is presented in such a sterile and distant way, teachers tend to compel learning through either extrinsic rewards or punishments. Both miss the

point for Bruner, as they did for Dewey, and they do not provide the conditions conducive to further independent learning. Rather, the intrinsic rewards of “interest and curiosity and the lure of discovery” must be summoned through an ongoing engagement of the child with an authentic and meaningful problem. “One of the least discussed ways of carrying a student through a hard unit of material is to challenge him with a chance to exercise his full powers, so that he may discover the pleasure of full and effective functioning,” writes Bruner. “Good teachers know the power of this lure. Students should know what it feels like to be completely absorbed in a problem. They seldom experience this feeling in school.”²⁴

In “Chapter 4 – Intuitive and Analytical Thinking,” Bruner makes perhaps his most original and timely contribution. When our schools emphasize intellectual achievement, it is typically analytical thinking, which is prized and rewarded. This is understandable, according to Bruner, because the use of analytical approaches leads to much success in problem solving. Moreover, the successful application of an algorithm can be evaluated directly and, more or less, easily. Nevertheless, the primary emphasis on analytical thinking has led to a formalism that devalues intuitive thinking, which, Bruner argues, is a necessary component of all serious inquiry in the various disciplines. Mathematicians, physicists, and biologists have especially recognized the centrality of intuitive thinking to their work, seeing it variously as the ability to make good guesses or of having the capacity to suddenly and inexplicably reach a solution to a perplexing problem. Analytical and intuitive thinking must be seen as complementary, and our schools should value both and provide experiences that encourage the development of both.

Bruner admits to not being exactly sure what constitutes intuitive thinking. And he makes multiple calls for further research into identifying the nature of intuitive thinking as well as research into determining the necessary conditions for its growth and maintenance. He holds, however, that having an understanding of structural knowledge provides fertile ground for productive intuitive thinking, enabling students to draw connections among phenomena previously thought to be unrelated. Students must also be encouraged to develop a strong self-confidence, warranted by their structural knowledge, in order to approach their intuitive inquiry with confidence. For Bruner, however, there is also the sense of the primacy of intuitive experience, that it must somehow be cultivated as an antecedent to, and in anticipation of, further curricular learning. Echoing Dewey’s synthesis of child-centered perspective and curriculum-centered perspective, Bruner concludes that “it may be of first importance to establish an intuitive understanding of materials before we expose our students to more traditional and formal methods of deduction and proof.”²⁵

In “Chapter 5 – Motives for Learning,” Bruner considers with great sensitivity some of the psychological and social circumstances that compel and thwart intrinsic rewards for learning, and provides some suggestions on ways to soften the impact of the competitiveness associated with our meritocracy. In the final chapter, “Aids to Teaching,” he offers some tentative thoughts on how these observations might assist classroom teachers. Here he makes some broad-stroke policy recommendations as well about the teaching profession, some of which are fairly well worn (e.g., raising the status of the teaching profession, better teacher recruitment and training, etc.). But some of his recommendations (for instance, those having to do with the teacher as a “communicator, model and identification figure”) are quite rich and remain worthy of further consideration today. The teacher is generally cast in a positive light throughout the text, although it is clear that, for Bruner, the teacher is to play only a minor role in determining what to teach. Curriculum is best left in the hands of the subject-matter experts, and the

teacher's job is largely to translate expert knowledge into developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Throughout the text Bruner repeatedly attempts to qualify statements and perspectives about which he might reasonably anticipate sharp disagreement. Despite his primary focus on the physical sciences and mathematics, he bends over backward to be inclusive of the humanities—sometimes to the point of silliness. His insistence on the application of his structural orientation to understanding the humanities evinces little understanding of these disciplines, as, for instance, when he argues that “if a student is led further to understand that there are a relatively limited number of human plights about which novels are written, he understands literature the better for it.”²⁶

Bruner nevertheless recognizes that the national obsession with the STEM disciplines has the potential to marginalize teaching and learning in the humanities, an observation that seems oddly prescient given our circumstances today: “We can ill afford an alienated group of literacy intellectuals who feel that advances in science, which they may fail to understand out of a sense of being shunned by the system of rewards for technical and scientific achievement, betoken the destruction of traditional culture. It is certainly plain that at the very least there will have to be energy devoted to improving curricula and teaching in the humanities and social sciences comparable to what is now being devoted to science and mathematics.”²⁷ Despite being surrounded by colleagues at the Woods Hole Conference who were enthusiastic about new teaching technologies—including some colleagues who would likely stand to profit from their widespread adoption—Bruner struck a contrarian position. He offered a pointed rebuff to those technophiles who believed machines should simply replace teachers, and he worried instead about the passivity and intellectual lethargy these new media seem to engender in students as it turned them into spectators. Again, more research on this and related topics is needed, he assured the reader. His narrative throughout the text is marked by a degree of equanimity that would be disarming to anyone who might be predisposed to a critical perspective on the dominant Cold War aims of American education at that time.

IV

The publication of *The Process of Education* made Bruner a star. It was quickly translated into nineteen languages and distributed widely over areas of American influence. By 1961 Bruner was invited to join the Education Panel of President John F. Kennedy's Science Advisory Committee and participated with others in making recommendations on the direction of American educational policy.²⁸ The popularity of Bruner's book implicitly demonstrated the enduring value, efficacy, and viability of some key Deweyan progressive educational ideas. Indeed, one might say that it was precisely in repackaging these ideas that Bruner was able to tap into a deeply and widely held belief among American educators (if not also among the general population) in the importance of attending first and foremost to the child as meaningfully engaged with the world. In the Cold War battle for the hearts and minds of people at home and abroad, this was a key belief to underscore.

And yet *The Process of Education* carefully avoided attending to some other central Deweyan progressive ideas, potentially more transformative, having to do with the empowerment of teachers and the democratization of educational and social goals. Dewey explicitly rejected the view of the teacher as someone who simply translated and reduced expert knowledge to

the child's developmental level. Instead he argued for a view that distinguished the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter from that of the subject-matter expert, and he elevated this teacher knowledge to a much more profound and intellectually demanding and complex level. For Dewey, in "psychologizing the curriculum," the teacher "is concerned with the subject-matter of the science as *representing a given stage and phase of the development of experience*. His problem is that of inducing a vital and personal experiencing. Hence, what concerns him, as a teacher, is the ways in which that subject may become part of experience: what there is in the child's present that is usable with reference to it; how such elements are to be used; how his own knowledge of the subject-matter may assist in interpreting the child's needs and doings and determine the medium in which the child should be placed in order that his growth may be properly directed. He is concerned, not with the subject matter as such, but with the subject matter as a related factor in a total and growing experience."²⁹

Unlike Bruner, who was content to see the teacher as a mere conduit for the expert knowledge developed far away from the classroom, Dewey placed the onus on the teacher to continuously create and recreate curricula and method in responding to the needs of the learning child. In our own time, as we witness the further marginalization and disempowerment of teachers, it is important to remember what has been lost as Bruner's view of the teacher came to overshadow and replace Dewey's.

Perhaps even more troublesome is Bruner's complete abandonment of Dewey's emphasis on the need to continuously refine and articulate the social purposes for schooling. For Dewey, schools represented the primary means by which a democratic "society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction it wishes to move."³⁰ For Dewey, the foundational questions about the purpose of education can never be separated from the practical questions of educational process, pedagogical method, or curricular content. Bruner, however, was either oblivious to, or silent on, this critical Deweyan point. So while in the book's opening paragraph Bruner acknowledges an increasing tendency among Americans to engage the question of "What shall we teach and to what end?" his analysis avoids posing this question seriously. He defers instead to the undemocratic educational aims of the Cold War interests for which he worked: the efficient preparation of scientists and engineers for a nation at war and that would presumably remain at war for many years to come.

Today we have done little to modify this shallow purpose for schooling. We continue to orient our educational institutions around an obsessive focus on the STEM disciplines and to otherwise provide narrow forms of standardized vocational training. This has had a destructive impact on our culture and has damaged our ability to act as a democratic society.³¹ Again, we would do well to look past Bruner to Dewey in order to recover more humane, democratic, and hopeful educational purposes.

As a major cultural artifact of the Cold War, *The Process of Education* provides important clues to understanding the educational and social worlds we have inherited. Written at a time of increased awareness of the need to manage public opinion as a means of policy implementation, the book appropriated some effective and widely supported Deweyan progressive educational ideas and carried them into the second half of the twentieth century. In doing so, Bruner helped to keep part of the progressive educational tradition alive during a time of its significant retrenchment. On the other hand, Bruner's book may also have helped to further entrench some of the undemocratic educational practices and policies of the Cold War with

which we remain saddled. For this primary reason the book, and the cultural context from which it came, deserves our continued careful and critical study.

Notes

- 1 Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (1960; repr, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 33.
- 2 Frank G. Jennings, "A Friend of the Learning Child," *Saturday Review*, October 16, 1960, 94.
- 3 Paul Goodman, "Enlightened Teaching for the Young," *The New York Herald Tribune*, December 23, 1960, 28.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 See especially John Dewey's 1902 essay "The Child and the Curriculum," in *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education and Democracy*, ed. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998). Others have also recognized the parallels between Dewey's ideas and *The Process of Education*. See, for instance, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *The School Book: For People Who Want to Know What All the Hollering Is About* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973) and, more recently, David Olson, *Jerome Bruner: The Cognitive Revolution in Educational Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2007).
- 6 Elizabeth Knoll, "The Process of Education, 1960," Harvard University Press Blog, March 4, 2013. http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2013/03/the-process-of-education-jerome-bruner-1960.html#more (accessed August 18, 2015).
- 7 Bruner did acknowledge in the book's preface that "many of the ideas that emerged at the Conference and after have long and honorable lineages in the history of educational thought." Nevertheless, Bruner does not provide any citations or references that would recognize and acknowledge these lineages. See Bruner, *The Process of Education*, xxv.
- 8 Jerome Bruner, *In Search of Mind: Essays in Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 178.
- 9 Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).
- 10 A year after the publication of *The Process of Education*, one finds Bruner actually repeating some of the negative caricatures of Dewey and Progressive Education in the essay "After John Dewey, What?," which appeared in *Saturday Review* (Suppl., June 17, 1961) and was republished in his *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).
- 11 Bruner, *The Process of Education*, xvii.
- 12 Ibid., xxii.
- 13 As quoted in John L. Rudolph, "From World War to Woods Hole: The Use of Wartime Research Models for Curriculum Reform," *Teachers College Record* 104, no. 2 (March 2002): 232.
- 14 Ronald W. Evans, *The Hope for American School Reform: The Cold War Pursuit of Inquiry Learning in Social Studies* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 73.
- 15 For an insightful analysis of this model, see John L. Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- 16 For a helpful discussion of the manifestation of this scientism, see Mark Solovey's *Shaky Foundations: The Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus in Cold War America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013).
- 17 For an analysis of the term "propaganda," as well as the confluence of these interests at mid-century, see Timothy Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War: Educational Effects and Contemporary Implications* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000).
- 18 Bruner recounts some of this experience in his 1983 autobiography, *In Search of Mind*, 38–39.
- 19 Jerome S. Bruner, *Mandate from the People* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944).
- 20 For an analysis of Project Troy, see Allan A. Needle, "Project Troy and the Cold War Annexation of the Social Sciences," in *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War*, ed. Christopher Simpson (New York: The New Press, 1998), 3–38. For an analysis of CENIS, see Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communication Research & Psychological Warfare, 1945–1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- 21 Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 7.
- 22 Ibid., 31.
- 23 Ibid., 38–39. One might compare Bruner's position here to Dewey's in his 1902 essay "The Child and the Curriculum": "There is a sense in which it is impossible to value too highly the formal and symbolic. The genuine form, the real symbol, serve as methods in the holding and discovery of truth. They are tools by which the individual pushes out most surely and widely into unexplored areas. They are means by which he brings to bear whatever of reality he has succeeded in gaining in past searchings. But this happens only when the symbol really symbolizes—when it stands for and sums up in shorthand actual experiences which the individual has already gone through. A symbol which is induced from without, which has not been led up to in preliminary activities, is, as we say, a *bare* or *mere* symbol; it is dead and barren. Now, any fact, whether of arithmetic, or geography, or grammar, which is not led up to and into out of something which has previously occupied a significant position in the child's life for its own sake, is forced into this position. It is not a reality, but just the sign of a reality which *might* be experienced if certain conditions were fulfilled. But the abrupt presentation of the fact as something known by others, and requiring only to be studied and learned by the child, rules out such conditions of fulfillment. It condemns the fact to be a hieroglyph: it would mean something if one only had the key. The clue being lacking, it remains an idle curiosity, to fret and obstruct the mind, a dead weight to burden it." From: *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education and Democracy*, 243.

- 24 Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 50.
- 25 Ibid., 59.
- 26 Ibid., 24.
- 27 Ibid., 79.
- 28 Bruner recalls the book's reception and the changes it brought to his life in his *In Search of Mind*, 184–187.
- 29 John Dewey, "The Child and the Curriculum," in *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education and Democracy*, 242–243.
- 30 John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," in *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education and Democracy*, 234. Originally published in 1897.
- 31 For an excellent elaboration of this point, see Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

|TWO

Raymond Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces That Have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools* (1962)

Gary K. Clabaugh

Introduction

Here, in brief, is why *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* is a classic: it remains embedded in memory long after it has been read; it can be reread with a sense of discovery; it explains the present by describing the past; and it adds a vital perspective to public schooling's historic narrative.¹

Focus on Efficiency

Broadly speaking, today's school reformers misuse and overemphasize high-stakes testing, are preoccupied with narrow vocational objectives, proceed as if privatization is necessarily superior, bully teachers instead of eliciting their cooperation, and fault public education for the inevitable academic consequences of festering social and economic injustices. Many wonder how such a misbegotten agenda ever became so dominant.² Callahan describes its beginnings.

Education and the Cult of Efficiency focuses on that critical period (1900–1930) when the general social and economic climate pushed public schooling into a long-lasting embrace of what Callahan labels “the cult of efficiency.”

Until Congress sharply restricted immigration in the mid-1920s, an unprecedented flood of foreigners poured into the United States. Combined with the simultaneous mass movement of millions from farm to city, this influx ballooned urban school enrollment and created unprecedented funding challenges. Between 1906 and 1917, for example, the School District of Philadelphia was forced to build 44 new elementary and 6 new high schools.³ That's 50 new schools in just 11 years.

Temple, Town Meeting, and Factory

What people wanted from these schools varied from person to person. But we can make sense of their expectations if we recast complex priorities in terms of three ideal types. Every school incorporates all three of these types to a greater or lesser degree, although one is typically dominant.

The most time-honored ideal type is the school as temple. Its origin can be traced back some 6,000 years to the very first schools. Here the focus is on tradition, values, and proper behavior. The United States Military Academy at West Point is an excellent example of a temple-dominant school.

The school as temple contrasts sharply with the ideal type—the town meeting. Here the focus is on accommodating individual differences through civility, bargaining, and compromise. Quaker (Society of Friends) schools typically exemplify town meeting–dominant education.

The most modern ideal type originated in the 1900–1930 time period that Callahan describes. It is the school as factory. Here the dominant concern is efficiency and productivity. This focus was the consequence of the explosive growth of urban school populations just described, along with prevailing inflation at the time. This combination generated intense funding pressure—so intense, in fact, that school administrators could hardly avoid industrial-style management. Efficiency—defined as low per-pupil cost—became their top priority, and the school as factory was born.⁴

Largely absent from these factory-dominant schools were concerns about tradition, pride of work, personal happiness, life fulfillment, depth of character, abiding values, group membership, and “proper” behavior—all manifestations of the now largely ignored school as temple.

Similarly absent was a focus on democratic decision-making, individual differences, concern for others, civility, and willingness to compromise, all key elements of the school as town meeting and of a functioning democracy.

The first public schools, usually one-room affairs, were a combination of temple and town meeting. But with the explosive growth of urban public schooling, these priorities were largely left to elite private schools. Ordinary people’s children now ended up in factory-dominant schools.⁵

Despite some waxing and waning, the school as factory remained dominant throughout the twentieth century. And today’s reformers are insuring its continued dominance thus far this century. Like their early twentieth-century predecessors, for instance, they still proceed with a top-down style of management that imperiously disregards teacher knowledge and experience. And they waste educators’ irreplaceable time and energy on over-emphasized (and badly misused) high-stakes, quality-control testing that foolishly applies a single proficiency standard to all and sundry.

As a matter of fact, taken together, their contemporary school as factory “reforms” exceed anything that the early twentieth-century cult of efficiency evangelists imagined. They impose things like vouchers; the contracting out of ancillary and auxiliary school services; privatized school district management; and privately operated, publicly financed charter schools—including for-profit corporate chains. Worse, they offer big bags of federal money to states and/or school districts that join in this celebration of the school as factory with greatest—often bogus—enthusiasm.

The New Breed

In the Callahan era, business-style school management fit the spirit of the time. President Coolidge famously captured that spirit with this statement: “The chief business of the American people is business.”⁶ Callahan emphasizes that the public school’s unique organization, support, and voter control made it especially susceptible to this *zeitgeist*. Meanwhile, however, elite private schooling scoffed at industrialization.

In this era, “experts” began preaching the virtues of “scientific” business methods and practices. They sermonized that modern schools should be run like the most up-to-date industrial corporations, using cost accounting and cost management as their guides.⁷ They promised that running the schools like a business would, by improving efficiency, solve the public school funding crises.

Most of these scientific management experts were professors who, in addition to advising industry, wrote influential school administration texts, acted as consultants to major city school systems, and trained industrial-style school administrators in newly minted departments of educational administration.⁸

Business-oriented school boards, elected by cost-conscious voters, eagerly hired these new industrial-style managers. The expectation was that they would put the school district in the black by focusing on per-pupil costs. Callahan explains that if budget restrictions meant, say, offering only one foreign language, these business-trained managers were expected to choose the cheapest per-pupil option.

Callahan unambiguously disapproves of business methods and industrial values for school management. He charges that it debases schooling, and he offers plentiful evidence that these allegedly superior management methods were often based on scientifically primitive studies of heavy industry—the production of pig iron being one example.

Callahan charges that this new breed of “scientific” managers was uneducated and unscholarly. No liberal arts were included in their training, and they were rarely required to study things like educational philosophy, teaching methodology, or child development. Hence, says Callahan, school leaders trained in this manner were not equipped to ask the basic questions in education. Moreover, they had no real understanding of what being educated actually meant. Worse still, they no longer identified with educators, but with business executives.⁹

Callahan notes further that America’s habitual anti-intellectualism legitimized their ignorance. Their supposedly pragmatic style of leadership often appealed to the businessmen who increasingly dominated local boards of education. But this contempt for mere book learning badly damaged public education.¹⁰

A Nation at Risk and the Muckrakers

The present wave of school reform was touched off by the Reagan administration’s release of *A Nation at Risk*. This jeremiad set off a deluge of criticism that has yet to abate. It is now more or less taken for granted by the media that our public schools are substandard and that something must be done.

During the cult-of-efficiency era, something similar happened. The early 1900s saw the rise of investigative journalists and novelists who came to be called muckrakers. Their detailing

of business abuses and government corruption proved both popular and profitable. Soon a formidable cluster of popular journals such as *McClure's*, *Colliers*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* were shocking the public with lurid revelations.

It wasn't long before public schooling was added to the muckrakers' target list. Just as with *A Nation at Risk*, alarmed readers were repeatedly told that their public schools were horribly managed and that reform was urgently needed. And the remedy that the muckrakers most often recommended was "scientific management."¹¹

The "Cult of Efficiency"

Callahan details how business values, muckraking journalism, public cost concerns, and the "scientific" management movement combined to form what he calls the "cult of efficiency." And he explains that public schooling's susceptibility to pressure, fads, and fancies meant that this cult spread like metastasizing cancer.

One of the more interesting features of Callahan's book is his detailed description of the cult's major evangelists. John Franklin Bobbitt, a University of Chicago professor, for instance, was one of the new faith's most prominent "preachers." Bobbitt's lectures and publications brashly reduced public education to industrial proportions, transformed schools into factories, and urged American educators to make efficiency their master. Callahan documents the extremity of Bobbitt's pro-business bias with numerous quotes and examples, and he demonstrates how Bobbitt's recommendations were based on his background as an advisor to heavy industry.

In an era without much job security, only a few educators had the gumption to openly reject this new vision. One was Thomas J. McCormick, a high school principal from La Salle, Illinois. He informed the Bobbitt-embracing National Education Association's Department of Secondary Education that the word "practical" required a much deeper meaning than was being ascribed to it by the scientific management crowd. Then he informed these NEA officials¹² that in their "inordinate zeal to 'practicalize' and popularize education," they were forgetting that its purpose was "to make men and women as well as engineers and 'rope-stretchers.'"¹³

"Scientific Management," or the Taylor Method

"Scientific management" played such a key role in the cult of efficiency that Callahan devotes an entire chapter to it. He describes how it first captured national attention in 1910 when the method played a pivotal role in an Interstate Commerce Commission hearing on railroad freight rates. A number of witnesses testified that if the railroads would only adopt scientific management, they could increase wages and still lower costs. One "expert" even testified that scientific management could revolutionize the whole of industry to the same degree, as had the introduction of machinery.

These ICC hearings vaulted scientific management, along with its chief architect, mechanical engineer Frederick W. Taylor, from obscurity to national prominence.¹⁴ Taylor was certain that there was one best way to do any job, and scientific investigation could reveal what that was. Apply it, he promised, and costs will fall as productivity soars.

Taylor assured all and sundry that his method could cancel out "the innate laziness of men," save money, and dramatically improve production.¹⁵ The workers' role was simply to do

exactly as they were told because, according to Taylor, they were incapable of understanding the scientific basis of the procedure.¹⁶ Should they refuse to cooperate fully, they should be sacked.¹⁷

Taylor's ideas were soon applied to public schools. Callahan writes: "His ideas were adopted, interpreted and applied chiefly by administrators: and while the greatest impact was upon administration, the administrator, and the professional training programs of administration, the influence extended to all of American education from the elementary schools to the universities."¹⁸

In case the reader is unfamiliar with the contemporary rebirth of Taylor's system, here is the website teacherbiz's description of what is going on right now in Camden, New Jersey's, public schools: "*Professional educators with decades of experience are being provided with canned, scripted curricular units that even go so far as to tell teachers what to say and what to write on the board [emphasis in original] in virtually every lesson; these units must be followed to the day, without diversions to accommodate for struggling students, etc.*"¹⁹ Numerous traditional public schools, charter schools, and charter school chains (for example, KIPP, the largest corporate charter school chain in the United States) generally follow such a procedure.²⁰

To any skilled teacher this system is plainly ridiculous. He or she has spent a professional lifetime learning how to properly adjust instruction. But some contemporary reformers, school administrators, and school corporate heads seem to think that scripted lessons are the latest thing.

Scripted lessons do have the "advantage" of encouraging experienced, more expensive, and independent-minded teachers to quit—or, as was the case in New Orleans, simply be fired as charter schools took over. Then underqualified but less expensive and more compliant replacements can be recruited from "alternative" sources, such as Teach for America.²¹

"Scientific management" was supposedly based on precise measurement—typically, time and motion studies. School managers were to use the resultant data to tell teachers precisely what to do, when to do it, and how long it must take. And underlying this lockstep approach was one of Taylor's key assumptions: "Most of us remain, through the great part of our lives, in this respect, grown-up children, and do our best only under pressure of a task of comparatively short duration."²² The goal was to get the absolute most out of the teacher/workers without, as Taylor solicitously puts it, "injuring their health."²³

Taylor also recommended paying efficient workers bonuses. He said his experiments disclosed that people would not work at a higher rate of speed unless they were paid more and assured that the pay increase was permanent.²⁴ Teachers seldom benefitted from this aspect of Taylor's system.

Other Evangelists

Frank Spaulding, chairman of the newly formed Department of Education at Yale University, was another leading light in the "scientific" management of schools. It was Spaulding, Callahan explains, who introduced "costs per pupils," "investment per pupil," and references to students as "products" of the "school plant."²⁵ Spaulding stated flatly that what is to be taught must ultimately be determined not on educational, but financial grounds.²⁶

While Spaulding's influence was growing, other advocates of "scientific" management also came to prominence. One was Franklin Bobbitt, as mentioned above. Callahan recounts that

Bobbitt regarded teachers as mere “workers” (“more mechanics than philosophers,” as Bobbitt disdainfully put it). He also asserted that they require a top-down style of management and detailed instruction in the methods to be employed. Regarding overall goals, Bobbitt recommended that a clear-cut set of exact standards be supplied by the business and industrial world—as a public service.²⁷

One might think that Spaulding, Bobbitt, and company outdid all contemporary reformers in transforming public schools into factories. But neither they nor any other early twentieth-century reformers ever advocated anything like replacing traditional schools with privately managed, publicly financed charter schools—many of them operated by for-profit corporate chains.

High-Stakes Tests and Teacher Ratings

Like today’s reformers, cult-of-efficiency advocates depended heavily on high-stakes tests. And Callahan reports that many educators thought this unwise, though most voiced no opposition—perhaps because their jobs were at stake. Once in a while, though, one would speak out. Here is what William E. Maxwell, the school superintendent of New York City, had to say:

When I read that...after shedding lakes of ink and using up untold reams of paper and consuming the time of un-numbered teachers in administering and scoring the Courtis standard tests in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, the learned director reached the conclusion that “29% of the pupils in the eighth grade could exchange places with a like number of students in the fourth grade,” I am inclined to exclaim: “My dear sir, what do you expect? That all the children in a grade would show equal ability in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing? Any teacher of experience could have told you that they would not. You should have known it yourself. One flash of Horace Mann’s insight would be worth a thousand miles of your statistics.”²⁸

Current efforts to reform public schooling also are dependent on high-stakes testing.²⁹ Outcomes are widely disseminated to pressure educators...and it works. A suburban Philadelphia newspaper, for example, features the following headline: “Board Addresses Decrease in Test Scores.” And the first line of the story reads: “A number of lower scores on standardized tests left officials in the Wissahickon School District with a lot of explaining to do.”³⁰

This kind of press is a key reason why more and more educators give short shrift to everything that isn’t tested. They are so intimidated that they just teach to the test. Others, finding it impossible to legitimately raise scores to the demanded level, resort to cheating. But despite these difficulties, it is a rare school administrator who has the guts to question this priority.

Teacher Accountability

Early twentieth-century reformers also set out to hold teachers accountable. In 1913 the *American School Board Journal* reported that urban administrators were “almost without exception” working out “elaborate plans for rating the work of instructors.”³¹ Sometimes these evaluations included all school personnel, even the janitor.³²

One particularly disturbing element of some rating schemes was crediting the teacher with the percentage of children promoted. Higher promotion rates resulted in substantial dollar

savings.³³ This encouraged teachers to pass students regardless. Cost accounting, notes Callahan, superseded instruction.

Callahan also reports that the difficulty of including relevant social, economic, and educational factors in the ratings caused many teachers to ultimately be assessed on general impressions.³⁴ And it seems unlikely that those developing these ratings considered that classrooms were often vastly overcrowded, and that underpaid and overworked teachers were not only expected to successfully instruct, but to comfort the afflicted; inspire the defeated; rein in bullies; correct disruptive behavior; observe the children for signs of abuse and/or neglect; instill a love of learning, patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, and fair play; check heads for lice; teach students manners; cope with kids (and parents) who spoke little or no English; and do all of this with nothing more than some chalk, a blackboard, a bulletin board, and a few books.³⁵

The Timid, Docile Teacher

Callahan reports that many administrators doubted they could rate teachers fairly. But most rated them anyway. He attributes this to self-defense.³⁶ Teachers also regarded these ratings as odious and unfair. Yet they meekly, if resentfully, accepted them. Callahan remarks that “the teacher had been, and was expected to be, timid.”³⁷

He attributes this timidity to teacher powerlessness and vulnerability. Most worked without tenure and could easily be fired.³⁸ He adds, however, that the teachers of this era generally were timid, unassertive individuals to begin with. In fact, he quotes John Dewey on this: “In the main the most docile of the young are the ones who become teachers when they are adults. Consequently they still listen docilely to the voice of authority.”³⁹

Both Callahan and Dewey fail to recognize that this docility might have been largely attributable to the fact that the teaching force was overwhelmingly female in a male-dominated world.⁴⁰

School Quality Surveys

“Scientific management” also featured school-quality surveys similar in intent to the ratings required by No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. The “experts” conducting these surveys typically were professors from the newly established and rapidly expanding university-based programs in educational administration. Focusing on price and product and uncritically embracing business-style management, they provoked prestigious opposition.

John Dewey, for instance, strongly opposed the application of business procedures and industrial values to schooling. He recognized the power and place of genuine science in education, but he repeatedly criticized as oversimplified and unscientific the supposedly “scientific” management then being conducted.⁴¹

Dewey wryly observed that most of the “scientific” initiatives in the works at that time were really the same old education masquerading as science. He also stated that while testing can be valuable, it was being put to exactly the wrong purposes. Instead of being used to gain a better understanding of children, it was being misused to classify and standardize them.⁴² Dewey’s concerns, along with those of other prestigious critics, were largely ignored.

The Platoon School

Callahan also describes the birth, growth, and incomplete decline of the platoon school. It was, in essence, a pedagogical assembly line, splitting students into platoons that moved from one specialist teacher to another according to a rigid schedule. One platoon might be studying arithmetic with that specialist teacher; another might be working on art or physical education with these specialist teachers; still another might be completing a science assignment in the back of an English classroom while a basic grammar lesson was going on.

The core idea was to make maximum use of the “school plant” and its facilities. Even six-year-olds had six or seven teachers a day—sometimes more. In this system dollar values largely replaced educational values in decision making. Callahan describes, for instance, how the retention of children in a grade was balanced by making an equal number of double promotions. But the essential problem with it was, and is, that students are human beings, not industrial products.

The platoon school is still around. Secondary schools with their tight schedules, specialist teachers, and lockstep schedules are direct descendants. But until it began to fall out of favor around 1930, the platoon system also was widely used in elementary schools.⁴³

Climate of the Times in Which the Work Was Written

Callahan began working on this book in 1957. The Cold War was intense. The Soviet Union had just launched the first-ever human-made satellite. This kindled broad fears that the United States had fallen behind the Soviets in both science and education. Congress subsequently approved, and President Eisenhower signed into law the National Defense Education Act, the most comprehensive education legislation in the nation’s history. It increased federal spending on education fivefold.⁴⁴

While Callahan continued his research and writing, ever-increasing numbers of U.S. advisors were being sent to South Vietnam. African Americans conducted a historic sit-in at a segregated Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The Berlin Wall was erected. The Soviet Union launched the first man into space. A U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba failed. And the Food and Drug Administration approved “the Pill.”

In 1962—the year Callahan’s work was actually published—the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the United States and the U.S.S.R. to the brink of mutual annihilation. U.S. involvement in Vietnam grew ever more intense. James Meredith, an African American, was admitted to the racially segregated University of Mississippi (but only because he was protected by a court order and truckloads of steel-helmeted U.S. Marshals). And Rachel Carson’s best-selling book *Silent Spring* warned of an impending worldwide environmental catastrophe.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Callahan’s Book

Callahan details a historic period in which three major developments were occurring simultaneously: industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. The interplay among these forces makes any causal analysis complex. Fortunately, Callahan’s specific concern—the

transformation of public schooling to an essentially industrial model—is relatively limited in scope, as are his causal claims. Anything more ambitious would have required multiple volumes. So he gets a “pass” on this one.

The most salient strength of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* is its contemporary relevance. Time and again one can see connections with what is happening today.

Another strength is the care and industry that went into its writing. Clearly it was painstakingly researched and carefully written.

A weakness is Callahan’s failure to grant full consideration to the need for efficiency. He doesn’t ignore that need, but at times he underplays it. Public schooling is very expensive. In the school year 2012–2013, for instance, it cost U.S. taxpayers \$632 billion. But, as Callahan emphasizes, we must not allow too intense a focus on efficiency to distort—even destroy—schooling’s ultimate purposes.

A greater weakness is Callahan’s failure to consider how a predominantly female teaching force influenced the events he describes. During the period 1900 to 1930, female teachers outnumbered men by about 5 to 1. This dominance, combined with the sexism of the age, surely encouraged the condescending and dismissive view of teachers that Callahan emphasizes.

By 1930, when Callahan’s book closes, the number of male public school teachers began inching upward. By 1986 males in teaching reached a peak of 31%—nearly double that of 1930. During Reagan’s presidency, however, the percentage of male teachers began a steady decline to the present low of 23.7%.⁴

Do today’s reformers shrug off teacher knowledge because the teaching force is still overwhelmingly female? Would they pay more attention if it were 76.3% male? Perhaps.

Significance and Influence When Written and Its Relevance Today

Education and the Cult of Efficiency attracted considerable attention when it was first published. There were numerous reviews, and they were generally favorable. *The Clearing House*’s review, for instance, stated: “This volume should provide both layman and educator with knowledge which may be helpful in directing the future of American education.”⁴⁶

But the book did have detractors. One was the sociologist David Street who, in the *American Journal of Sociology*, wrote:

Educators pressing for an enlarged professional mandate over the affairs of the public schools keep stumbling over the hard fact that...their claims to a monopoly of expert knowledge are weak. Thus, while it is clear that the intrusions into the schools made by businessmen, veterans’ groups, and other outside interests have often been detrimental to American education. It is also apparent that educators have had little in the way of a solid defense against these intrusions.⁴⁷

Street seems to think that veteran teachers possess little or no hard-won knowledge. But an experienced educator knows a great deal more about teaching than the typical sociologist, school board member, businessman, politician, or school reform-minded billionaire. Why, then, don’t would-be school reformers work cooperatively with veteran teachers? Would expert accountants, veterinarians, lawyers, or physicians be similarly ignored?

Street also comments:

[T]he author's line of argument itself reflects to some extent the weakness of the education profession's ideological position. He is certain that the efficiency-seekers were wrong, but his reply is only the oblique one that quality should be more important. The analysis and the educational philosophy underlying it do not seem to come to terms with the realities that education is involved in the local political process, that resources are never what the educator "needs," that the superintendent must act as mediator between values of education and economy, and that he must use whatever managerial knowledge he can find. There can be no utopian concern for quality alone.⁴⁸

Of course public school policy is political, and there can be no utopian concern for quality alone. And Callahan clearly knows that. But school funding too often falls flagrantly short of what is needed. For instance, teachers—particularly those in revenue-starved big-city or rural schools—are often so short on vital supplies that they pay for them out of their own pockets. This was certainly going on at the time in question, yet Street fails to acknowledge anything of the sort. Plus, one wonders if he would be so sanguine about compromised educational quality if a child he loved were being short-changed.

It certainly is true, as Street asserts, that the superintendent is caught in the middle and must use whatever knowledge is at hand. But Callahan clearly agrees with that. What he condemns are administrators who, for the sake of their careers, throw youngsters under the cost-cutting bus.

William Cartwright of Duke University wrote a more thoughtful critique. He praises Callahan's effort, but only as a "useful caricature." He writes that the book is not really "a study of the social forces that have shaped the administration of the public schools. It is a study of only one of those forces. And even that study is incomplete. It does not give adequate recognition to the fact that school superintendents are required to be business administrators."⁴⁹

Cartwright offers fair criticism. Callahan's subtitle is too ambitious. And perhaps his account is something of a caricature, but one that artfully captures the essence of the age.

Conclusions

Early on we noted that Callahan's style is polemical. Perhaps this quote from *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* explains what set him on edge:

In the end, the American people got what they deserved for forcing their educators to spend their time on accounting rather than on the education of children. Until every child has part of his work in small classes or seminars with fine teachers who have a reasonable teaching load, we will not have given the American high school, or democracy for that matter, a fair trial. To do this, America will need to break with its traditional practice, strengthened so much in the age of efficiency, of asking how our schools can be operated most economically and begin asking instead what steps need to be taken to provide an excellent education for our children. We must face the fact there is no cheap, easy way to educate a man; and (without) that a free society cannot endure.⁵⁰

At its conclusion Callahan offers this hope for his book:

[I hope it] will provide both laymen and educators with knowledge which may be helpful in directing the future of American education.... Beyond this, it is hoped that the American people will see that the introduction into education of concepts and practices from fields such as business and industry can be a serious error. Efficiency and economy—important as they are—must be considered in the light of the quality of education being provided. Equally important is the inefficiency and false economy of forcing educators to devote their time and energy to cost accounting.⁵¹

At the moment Callahan's hopes seem misbegotten. In many financially distressed districts, cost accounting still reigns; only now it is joined by the overuse, misuse, and abuse of standardized testing and the most intense expressions of the school as factory yet devised.

Should would-be reformers actually want to improve public education, not just rearrange things to suit their own selfish purposes, they must first address those core issues that destroy academic achievement at its very roots. Things like grossly unequal school funding, the 2.7 million American children with an incarcerated parent,⁵² the steady erosion of the middle class, and the concentrated poverty that is failed schooling's prime breeding ground.⁵³

Notes

- 1 Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Vernon Mallinson, review of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* by Raymond E. Callahan, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 12, no. 1 (November 1963), 87–88.
- 2 Private schools have generally escaped the standardized testing requirements. For instance, in Pennsylvania they are exempt from the recently imposed Keystone tests that public school students must pass to qualify for a diploma.
- 3 Peter Williams, *Philadelphia: The World War I Years* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 27.
- 4 Raymond Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 14–15.
- 5 Cost concerns mean that diocesan-controlled Roman Catholic schools typically were and are factories, too. Wealthier Catholics, however, can send their children to non-diocesan Roman Catholic academies that adopt the school as temple model.
- 6 Often misquoted as “The business of America is business.” Actually, in January 1925, Coolidge told the Society of American Newspaper Editors: “The chief business of the American people is business.” See <http://www.thisdayinquotes.com/2010/01/business-of-america-is-business.html> for the full story.
- 7 Callahan, 158–161.
- 8 The formal training of school administrators was just getting under way.
- 9 Callahan, 247.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Callahan, 245.
- 12 At this time school administrators, not classroom teachers, dominated the NEA.
- 13 Quoted in Callahan, 11.
- 14 Callahan, 19–22.
- 15 Callahan, 27.
- 16 Callahan quotes Taylor at length on this. See Callahan, 27.
- 17 Quoted in Callahan, 32.
- 18 Callahan, 41.
- 19 *Predictable reform tactics in Camden, Part 2: Layoffs and Scripted Lessons*. teacherbiz. <https://teacherbiz.wordpress.com/2014/05/15/predictable-reform-tactics-in-camden-part-2-layoffs-and-scripted-lessons/>
- 20 *Schools Matter: Full Interview with Former Charter Teacher*. <http://www.schoolsmatter.info/2014/01/full-interview-with-former-charter.html>
- 21 *The Great Charter School Tryout: Are New Orleans Schools a Model for the Nation or a Cautionary Tale?* <http://newwf.org/the-great-charter-tryout-are-new-orleans-schools-a-model-for-the-nation-or-a-cautionary-tale/>
- 22 Taylor, quoted in Callahan, 29.

- 23 Taylor, quoted in Callahan, 31.
- 24 Callahan, 31.
- 25 Callahan, 70.
- 26 Callahan, 73.
- 27 Callahan, 83.
- 28 Maxwell, quoted in Callahan, 122.
- 29 This contemporary development had its origin in the 1980s with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).
- 30 Eric Devlin, "Board Addresses Decrease in Test Scores," *The Ambler Gazette*, December 14, 2014, 1.
- 31 Callahan, 104.
- 32 Callahan, 108.
- 33 Callahan, 169.
- 34 Callahan, 105.
- 35 Some time ago I came across a form of this list on the web but cannot relocate it.
- 36 Callahan, 111.
- 37 Callahan, 66.
- 38 Callahan, 111.
- 39 Quoted in Callahan, 121.
- 40 Vintee Sawhney, *The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960's*. The CWLU History Website GrrlSmarts. http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/_notes/GrrlSmarts/sawhney.html
- 41 Callahan, 124–125.
- 42 Idem.
- 43 Callahan, 145.
- 44 Thomas D. Snyder, ed., *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait* (Washington, DC: Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 34.
- 45 *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011*. <http://www.edweek.org/media/pot2011final-blog.pdf>
- 46 Howard F. Bolden, review of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, by Raymond E. Callahan. *The Clearing House*, 37, no. 7 (March 1963), 441–442.
- 47 David Street, review of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, by Raymond E. Callahan. *American Journal of Sociology*, 69, no. 6 (May 1964), 673–674.
- 48 Idem.
- 49 William H. Cartwright, review of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, by Raymond E. Callahan. *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 49, no. 4 (March 1963), 722–723.
- 50 Callahan, 120.
- 51 Callahan, 263.
- 52 Katie Riley, *Sesame Street Reaches Out to 2.7 Million American Children with an Incarcerated Parent*. Factank: New in the Numbers, Pew Research Center, June 21, 2013. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/21/sesame-street-reaches-out-to-2-7-million-american-children-with-an-incarcerated-parent/>
- 53 See, for example, Hope Yen, "4 in 5 in USA Face Near-Poverty, No Work." *USA Today*, July 28, 2013. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2013/07/28/americans-poverty-no-work/2594203/>

|THREE

Paul Goodman, *Compulsory Mis-education* (1962) and *The Community of Scholars* (1964)

David Hursh

Paul Goodman, New York Jewish intellectual, married bisexual father of three children, essayist, anarchist, and Aristotelian scholar, was one of the most influential writers of the 1960s. Regrettably, he is now largely forgotten. But for many of us who entered adulthood in the 1960s and sensed something amiss in society, Goodman gave us a vision and a voice. He relentlessly criticized schools and society for promoting docility and conformity and called for a society in which people engaged in learning to improve their own lives and the world around them. I read *Compulsory Mis-education* (1962), *The Community of Scholars* (1964), and their companion, *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), a few years after they were published, and shortly after beginning my undergraduate studies in 1966. It has been almost 50 years since I read them. A recent film on Goodman's life is appropriately titled *Paul Goodman Changed My Life* (2008). In re-reading these two books, it is clear to me that Goodman's ideas still resonate with me today.

The Context of This Character

Goodman, born in New York City in 1911, lived at various times as a classic New York intellectual sought after by the media for his critique of society, and at other times as an outcast marginalized for that same critique. Similarly, those who knew him, such as Susan Sontag; Grace Paley (1959, 1985); Vera Williams (1981, 1984), author of wonderful children's books; Michael Rossman (1971, 1972), activist in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement; Allen Graubard (1972), whose 1960s critiques of the free school movement from a Deweyan perspective are still the best introduction to Dewey and George Dennison, author of *The Lives of Children: The Story of the First Street School*

(1972), all longed to be around and in conversation with Goodman while at the same time grappling with his verbal aggressiveness and his swings between self-importance and whining.

Not surprisingly, given that his father left the family just after Goodman's birth, never to be heard from again, and Goodman's concern with youth, he was (most of the time) a devoted father. Unfortunately, to his great sadness, his only son, Matthew, died in a mountain climbing accident in 1967. Goodman's writing and health declined after the incident, and he died in 1972.

Existentialism, Education, and Schools

The impetus for Goodman's critique of school and society resides in his concern that we as a society fail to provide people in general and adolescents in particular with a way to make sense of the world. Goodman's views reflected the 1960s interest in existential philosophy and personal meaning (particularly Albert Camus [1946, 1951] and John Paul Sartre [1969], in the poetry of The Beats,¹ and in Salinger's (1951) *The Catcher in the Rye*, with Holden Caulfield's disdain for phonies. Like his colleague Edgar Friedenberg, who wrote *The Vanishing Adolescent* (1959), Goodman felt that schools hindered the process by which adolescents came to define themselves as people. Friedenberg wrote that

growth is seriously blocked by anything that keeps youngsters from responding specifically to one another. Our cultural insistence on generalized patterns of response that ignore the significance of subtle but vital human differences is one of the things that most seriously impedes adolescence. (p. 64)

Goodman had little good to say about formal elementary and secondary education, describing schools as controlling and breaking students' spirits. He stated that schools are engaged in "progressive regimentation and brainwashing" (1962, p. 10) and that "mental illness is caused by powerlessness" brought on by institutions such as schools (p. 12). Goodman concluded that because students had little or nothing say about what they learned and lacked opportunities to connect their learning with larger issues, their motivation was undermined. Students had to adjust to the schools rather than schools adjusting to them. School, he contended, "reduces the young to ciphers, and the teachers to a martinet" (p. 56). In the end, school provided not merely a poor education, but mis-education.

In response, Goodman argued not for merely reforming schools but reconstructing education and society. He claimed that we needed to envision how education could occur in many places and times. Since much of what schools taught focused on disseminating content—much of which would be soon forgotten or was simply wrong—we should aim to teach children how to ask questions and solve problems. He wrote that we need to ask "Education how? Where? For what? And under whose administration?"

Goodman agreed with Dewey's educational goals and argued for a progressive approach. But he thought Dewey too optimistic in that Dewey believed that schools could demonstrate how democracy could work. "In fact," wrote Goodman, "our schools reflect our society closely, except that they emphasize many of its worst features, as well as having the characteristic defects of academic institutions of all times and places" (p. 24).