

A GUIDE TO TRENDS IN EDUCATION

By W. P. PERCIVAL

FOR some years past, much criticism has arisen concerning the educational systems of Canada and the United States. These criticisms have centred around two schools of thought that have been named Progressivism and Traditionalism. Unfortunately, no serious attempt appears to have been made to explain the aims of either. I shall try, therefore, to outline these two systems and to do so merely in an expository manner without attempting anything in the nature of a polemic.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to procure definitions. This is not too easy a task. Dr. Carleton Washburne, a leading Progressivist, whom I know personally and whom most teachers know at least through the Winnetka plan, says that if anyone should know what Progressivism is he himself should. Unfortunately, though, he does not define it.

Progressive Education is an attempt to get away from compartmentalism and alignment of the school studies as specified subjects. Its leaders think that the school and the social order stand too far apart and they wish to bring them closer together. They desire to reinterpret the values of life. These facts must be well understood. The central emphasis falls upon "the continuous reconstruction of experience." This is opposed to all teaching by subject, instead of which the *Social Studies* are made the basis of classroom procedure.

Progressive Education has as its tenets freedom, the development of initiative, self-reliance, individuality, and self-expression. It fosters purposeful learning, and connects itself with all phases of living. Its chief modern exponents have included such outstanding educators as W. H. Kilpatrick, Carleton Washburne, Ralph Tyler, B. H. Bode, Harold Rugg, and George Counts. Its aim is to develop the whole child, not merely his intellect. From this desire has sprung the "Child centred school" with the thesis that children must be treated as children now and not merely as junior adults. In its view, the school should take over all that concerns the child.

Dr. W. H. Kilpatrick, one of the exponents of the new philosophy, a man who could handle a class of six hundred or more mature students at one time, states that, though the term "Progressive Education" took its status only in 1918, it seems historically justifiable to say that the movement began with Jean Jacques Rousseau's "*Emile*" which was published in 1762,

almost two hundred years ago. Rousseau's ideas were incorporated but modified in those of Pestalozzi who established a school for ragged and vagrant children which ended in financial bankruptcy for him. The success of his later writings attracted the government; and the influence of his school at Yverdon spread all over the world, his chief contribution being that the child needs development from within rather than control from without. Other outstanding men who followed in the footsteps of Rousseau were Johann Friedrich Herbart, who propounded a scientific method of learning and the Americans, Francis W. Parker, John Dewey and G. Stanley Hall.

Everything for the pupils of Progressive schools begins with the study of human relationships and with life around them. "The Social Studies" they say, "form the natural centre for developing social understanding and aptitudes." This contains the germ of a most important idea, but one which cannot be perfected in a few short years.

This dependence upon the Social Studies is a novel approach for most of our Canadian teachers. That fact, however, must be fully grasped by all who wish to understand what is known as Progressivism.

In kindergarten and Grade I of Progressive Schools, the children are not only taught in the school but are also taken on excursions in the neighbourhood so that they may gain experience of things at first hand. In Grade II they may study primitive culture such as that of the Navajo or Hopi Indians or the Eskimos. In Grade III peasant culture such as that of the Russians, Japanese, or Swiss may be the means of enlarging their horizons. In the senior elementary grades, breadth of understanding may be taught as the child studies single economic problems. These may become the foundations on which to procure information concerning unemployment, depression, inflation, and such problems as those of production and distribution. As the maturity of the pupils increases, political and other problems may follow.

In his exposition of Progressivism, Washburne is careful to explain that learning by the means outlined does not involve an absence either of collective or of systematic study. Such systematic study must, however, spring from the important current problems which arise as the various investigations are made by each class.

Through such methods of work upon problems of day to day living, the pupil is expected to obtain an understanding of the his-

tory, geography, economics, political science, sociology and other major developments in various parts of the world. Arithmetic, spelling, writing and other skills become means towards the ends that the children desire to reach in their search to understand human relationship.

Shall I say then that *Progressive Education is a democratic movement wherein the child is respected as a person who is encouraged to learn and make decisions of his own.*

At its best, the Progressive school is one in which children are taught to cooperate, investigate and think. At its worst, it is one in which much time is wasted over trivialities and where misguided teachers imagine that their main duty is to keep children busy at something or other.

These "worst" schools have been the subject of many attacks. Unfortunately, even the best schools have been grouped with the worst, the assumption in the mind of the uninitiated being that all the new schools are almost equally bad.

The Traditional school is probably as hard to define as the Progressive school. There is indeed no such institution as a "Traditional school" as there is a "Progressive school." Those who advocate the Traditional school do not tell us whether the tradition they mean goes back one generation, two generations, to the dame schools of two centuries ago or to the Greeks. One writer, however, has given the cue that the teacher with twenty years experience is a Traditionalist. So apparently the tradition does not go back very far and includes many of us.

A fundamental of the Traditionalists is that all children must work upon a set curriculum. They set strict limits to a child's freedom in school, advocate a much more rigid discipline, set high ideals of life and desire that children strive towards them. Its modern exponents are W. C. Bagley, under whom I did my major work at Columbia University, Thomas H. Briggs, R. M. Hutchins, and Franklin Bobbitt.

Much is to be said for each of these two types of philosophy which, in the United States, have been dubbed "Lollipops versus Learning" by people who wish to ridicule the new philosophy. The Traditionalist believes that the school should stick to a restricted type of learning and not take over the functions of the home or the church. Traditionalism is thus diametrically opposed in essence to Progressivism.

Shall I be wrong if I define Traditional Education as that *whereby knowledge shall be imparted to all members of a class more or less simultaneously through the development of skills in Reading,*

Arithmetic, Writing and other specific school subjects by means of a carefully laid down curriculum in each?

If that is not a good definition, then, to paraphrase Washburne, I do not know what Traditionalism is.

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Two such distinctly different types of school can scarcely be expected to live peaceably side by side. Such a revolutionary innovation as the fully Progressive school cannot indeed be expected to be free from criticism. So great has been its appeal to the best in human nature, however, that schools operating on modifications of the principals enunciated sprang up in no small measure all over the United States. Naturally they were experimental. Naturally the teachers did not understand the theory fully. Naturally many introduced irrelevant novelties. So naturally parents and others grew alarmed at some of the strange procedures that their children reported. The criticisms which, to my knowledge, began about thirty years ago when I taught in the United States, were gentle at first. Unfortunately, the Progressivists laid themselves wide open to criticism and to endless misinterpretation and misunderstanding by writing: "The school must be transformed into a place where pupils go, *not primarily to acquire knowledge*, but to carry on a way of life." That was a crass blunder of first magnitude.

Four or five years ago the attacks became vitriolic. Led by H. J. Fuller, A. E. Bestor and S. E. Cairns, all then at the University of Michigan, the critics made many charges against the schools, the chief of which seem to be:

1. The schools are neglecting the fundamentals. They allegedly do this when they mingle the subjects together by working through the "Social Studies."

2. Frills and fads have taken the place of the more traditional subjects. Vocational courses, health and hygiene, etc., are placed in this category.

3. Drill has been abolished in favor of so called easy methods of learning and "soft pedagogy."

4. Discipline has been replaced by methods which induce law breaking and lead to juvenile delinquency.

The Progressivist, in his turn, claims that traditional schools have unfortunately not been modified by the findings of modern psychology and that self expression is unnecessarily crowded out of them. They also claim that the "Traditional school continues to extend its curriculum beyond the functionally justifiable as-

pects of a real or imagined completeness." But completeness is never reached, they claim, and thus pupils lose interest, become confused and drop out of school. To overcome these bad features, they say, it is essential that a child be able to use what he learns, at least in some degree. This the Progressivist claims is the natural method of learning.

It is most unfortunate that the critics, when attacking the progressive schools, do not restrict their attacks to the innovations of doubtful value in these schools. In my opinion they erred seriously when they attacked the conscientious educational leaders and the staffs of teacher training institutions whom they derisively term "experts", "knights in shining armour," etc. Many of them are so woefully ill informed as to believe that all the faults in the educational world began with John Dewey, who is alleged to be the archcriminal of a line of misanthropes who are wilfully setting the feet of children on the downward track. These critics also blast pragmatism, quote snippets from the writings of the "experts", misinterpret them and speak of the educators as using "gobbledygook" an ugly term of ill meaning, coined by a Texan to represent the pronouncements of certain United States public officials. We have even had Canadians using the same methods of attack and almost mouthing the same language as those of their United States bellwethers.

These criticisms have resulted in questionings by all who are seriously interested in education. Today we are again asking: What are the aims of education? How are these aims to be attained? I think it reasonable to say that, in our present stage of undeveloped scientific knowledge, no one knows all the answers to these very pertinent questions.

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All the sciences have had their period of infancy. Until three or four short centuries ago, it was believed that the world was flat, that the moon had a smooth surface and was self-luminous, and that a body five times heavier than another fell to the earth five times faster than the lighter and so on in other proportions. The engineer does not know all he should know about his trade; so we still have bridges collapsing and aeroplanes falling. The dentist does not know all about teeth but he no longer thinks simply of pulling a tooth when a patient tells him that one hurts. The day of the witch doctor has passed; the practicing physician does no more blood-letting and does not amputate every infected limb. In no profession do the skilled

persons yet know all the answers. The fact is that all the sciences, despite all their advances, are still in swaddling clothes. Only in the educational world do the critics pose as possessing all knowledge.

In company with the inquiring minds in other professions, schoolmen and schoolwomen are not neglecting research work. In this most difficult of all sciences where the intricacies of that most complex of all organisms, the human mind, is concerned, thousands of experiments are being performed. Professor W. S. Gray, of the University of Chicago, estimated some years ago that 2,500 research studies have been carried out in the field of reading alone. I saw a recent statement that doubled that number. It has been estimated that during this century the total number of investigations in the whole field of education has been about 100,000.

We in Canada are not idle in research work and investigation. All our Departments of Education and the provincial associations of teachers have standing sub-committees on curriculum and all kinds of surveys that meet several times each year.

Much information is available to help the educator. According to Lewis M. Terman, sixty per cent of all Americans have I.Q.'s below the minimum required to do good college work. Again, the ultra clever and the much below normal constitute about four per cent of the entire school population. How then can we expect all pupils to produce the same brand of work? How can they all be expected to write equally well, to spell equally well, to know two languages well, to solve difficult mathematical problems with the same degree of accuracy, or even to have the same tastes or the same inclination towards school work?

One of the greatest problems before the educator is this one of individual differences. What to do with the ultra-clever and the much below average has by no means been settled. Though a little has been done for the retarded child, no serious decision has yet been made as to the best that can be done for the very bright child. What happens is that individual teachers do what they can for the individuals in their classes, and that often ends the story.

Some of the many other facts discovered are worth recording at this point. For example, in a normal class of five year olds there is a spread of four years in their Intelligence Quotients. That is, some pupils will be normal; on the high side some will have the ability of seven year olds; on the low side,

some will have but three year old ability. When five and six year olds are in the same class the spread will be from three to eight years in the mental level. Thirty years ago it was discovered that one of the greatest causes of failure in the elementary grades was immaturity. Owing to conditions of our society, however, we have not been able to apply the remedies to the full. Aptitudes differ as does intelligence. No wonder we need well trained teachers for the lower grades! And so in the higher grades also!

The science of psychology is young. Though going back some seventy-five years it has reached the stature of a science only in our day. All the findings in such a complex field cannot be right. Likewise the science of pedagogy is young. Not all pedagogical problems have been solved. I feel that the schools are attacked in part because too much is expected of psychological and educational research in too short a time. We do not know which method of teaching is best and what kind of discipline will produce the best results. Given the opportunity and the time to experiment and to learn more, I feel sure that our research students will come up with results for the betterment of children just as scientists have improved their statements of the laws of Nature, and the treatment of their subjects.

The crux of the whole matter, however, is deeper than this. It lies in formulating a correct philosophy of education based on a sure knowledge of all the facts. A philosophy of education is merely a statement of what those competent to judge think the principles underlying an educational system should be, just as a Law of Nature is a statement of how leading scientists think Nature works. Such statements give rise to controversy. Because of his theory of falling bodies, Galilei deemed it prudent to leave his native city of Pisa. Many others have suffered for their philosophical beliefs and statements. Galilei's correct statement permitted true scientific progress, as do others in their respective spheres. If our educational philosophy is incorrectly written the plans and procedure of our teachers will be warped and our pupils misguided. If, however, our philosophy is correctly stated, sound procedures can follow, for both teacher and pupil will be on firm ground. As Galilei needed to experiment with the swinging lamp, and from the leaning tower of Pisa, so we need further experimentation on which to frame a truer statement of educational philosophy.

Though written differently and interpreted differently by teachers throughout Canada, there are certain traits common to the current philosophy of all the Canadian provinces. So far as I know, there is no strictly "Progressive" Province. Some lean towards the old, some towards the new. In general, I think it may be stated that the Eastern Provinces bear towards the Traditional and the West towards the Progressivist, but all the provinces have made wise selections from each.

Now that we have outlined the problem, let me say that I know of no school in Canada that has founded all its teachings upon those of the extreme Progressivists. In fact, I know of no school in Canada that has gone as far in its extremes as some schools elsewhere. On the other hand, the teaching and the methods have been modified so that I think I can safely say that, though still following set curricular patterns and teaching subjects in the traditional manner, everyone of us has been affected in greater or lesser degree by those great philosophers and teachers whose beneficent influence has come down to us during the past two hundred years.

Since none of us here subscribes to Progressive education as defined, we shall probably not wish to be aligned with Progressivism but rather will prefer to speak of progress in education. For my part, I believe that real progress has been made, even by those who consider themselves Traditionalists. I believe, for example, that great progress has been made in our schools by reason of the qualities of heart and mind of our teachers, and by the sincerity of our School Boards. I am confident also that many of our school procedures have been modified for the better under the influence of those liberalizing educational movements that have developed particularly during the past half century.

Almost everything bad is urged against our youth in some quarters today and almost all because of the alleged evil influence of the school. Pupils are termed, lazy, sloppy, pampered, "soft" and, in the alleged words of a Superintendent of Education in the United States, "unable to put up with any physical strain." This is the common type of omnibus accusation hurled without great depth of thought at youth and at the school. Fortunately youth does not knuckle down too easily to such wrongful accusations.

Something or someone always seems to pop up at the right time to vindicate youth. During the war the youth of England participated with the middle aged and old in rescuing the beleagured and despairing troops of Dunkirk under the most

withering and devastating fire. The youth of Canada landed in Normandy; others in ships protected the landings of the troops there on D day and subsequently, even though they knew that they themselves were "expendable." Through the day and the night they toiled at their dangerous allotted assignments. Our boys in the Air Force expended themselves that we might live, and came out of it with a glory that thrilled the world. Were such lads "unable to put up with any physical strain?" And a month ago a young slip of a Canadian girl, sixteen year old Marilyn Bell, a Grade X school child, stayed in the frigid waters of Lake Ontario swimming for over twenty-one hours. This she did without a drop of protecting oil. And all the while the critics of youth sat in their rocking chairs dreaming of the sparkling days of their own enchanting youth!

What shall we say of the future in education? I feel so sure of many things that I am going to be bold enough to recite some in the hope that they will help our mutual thinking. These ideas are based on the premise that the statesmen of all countries will be wise enough to avoid major catastrophies of their own making:

1. Present trends in education, as we know them, will continue. As in other professions, education has its conservatives, moderates and experimenters. These will go about their work as they see fit. This is all to the good. These forces all have their place, and it is difficult to say which is the most important. Naturally the experimenters meet with the greatest resistance, but they provide the lubricants which keep the wheels of progress in motion. We need not fear these forces at all because the others will apply the brakes.

2. All alarmists and malcontents notwithstanding, there will be no immediate revolution in education. All history shows how long a time is taken to effect any changes whatever. Some of the major changes in education have taken many years to develop—and they have not come into full fruition yet. What we shall see is a continuing evolution, for forces throughout the world are constantly striving to give to children a progressively better deal to make their lives happier as children and to prepare them better to meet the hazardous days ahead.

3. Life in the future will be much faster moving than that of today. The emotional strain will be more severe. The school, therefore, must play a leading part in striving to prepare children for this faster moving age. As the home must lay the foun-

dation through protection and love, so the school must receive the pupils as individuals and treat everyone with kindness. This element of kindness which is now a characteristic of the school must never be diminished. A huge debt of gratitude is due to the present generation of teachers who, from the kindness kindled in their own hearts, have extended the feeling to the pupils in their classes.

4. The problem of discipline will always be a major one. Since most adults appear to find difficulty in distinguishing between freedom and license, one must not expect immature children to restrain their animal desires on all occasions. The school must, however, cooperate wholeheartedly with the forces of law and order to impress upon children the necessity for right conduct and right living not only in school but also on the street. The golden rule must play a larger share in the minds of future generations if peace and happiness, truth and justice are to prevail.

5. The schools will always be centres of intellectual development. They now are and I foresee no possibility of their losing this prime function. Though necessarily essential, however, the development of the mind of the child is not the only function of the school. Teachers and parents are well aware of this and are active accordingly.

6. The days of the narrow school curriculum have gone, never to return. The schools of the future, far from reducing their offerings, will present an even greater number of courses that will appeal to the varied interests and abilities of children. It is my opinion that, though the basis of education in Canada will always remain intellectual, a place must also be found in school life whereby all the other good characteristics of human nature will also be developed.

7. Children at the extremes of the intelligence scales will be much better cared for in the schools of the next half century. Greater provision will be made for the very bright and for those of duller mental qualities.

All people do not possess the same talents either in number or kind and so all cannot proceed at the same pace or reach the same goals. It is inevitable also that all will not have the same inclination towards hard work. There will always be the proverbial hare and the slow moving tortoise. Unfortunately within a school system sleep, either literally or figuratively, is fre-

quently indulged in by the hares and, on the contrary, there seems to be something within the tortoises which keeps them going. We must see to it that the hares are kept fully awake. The fact is that, in this life, the race is to the strong, to the alert, to the vigorous, to the persistent. The school must recognize these factors and forces in increasing measure, and provide more and more to make suitable provision for individual differences. The doctrine of treating everybody alike must not apply in this respect.

Classes or divisions of classes for pupils of different mental ability will be by no means ironclad. Entrance and exit will be allowed. Some children will not be able to stand the pace or will not desire to stand it. Others will raise their stature and strive to get with the more select group.

8. Greater care will be taken to preserve the health of pupils and to remedy their physical defects. The measures now taken to preserve the eyesight of pupils by providing good natural and artificial light are one incontestable proof of the care for the young exercised by the present generation of adults. These will be extended in other directions. If the universities consider that they must have half million dollar winter centres for powerful young men and women, how much more essential is it to provide adequate playing space for growing boys and girls?

9. Teaching will become an increasingly respected profession. Barring major catastrophies in Canada, the day of the grossly underpaid teacher has vanished for ever. Just as there is no comparison between the underpaid, poorly educated teacher of questionable habits of seventy five years ago and the cultured lady and gentleman of today, so the teacher of the future will compare only with the best of that day.

10. The state will pay an increasingly large part of the expenses of the school. The inequalities of local systems of taxation will thus tend to disappear. I trust, however, that governments will continue to look to the local people to play a large part in the effective management of their schools.

11. Research studies will be continued and more effectively utilized for the improvement of school programmes and pupil ability.

12. Schools will be affected adversely by the increasing amounts of leisure time available to parents unless adequate

measures are taken for the protection of youth. The desires of parents to have their children with them on leisure pursuits will work against the school purposes. It is not too early to discuss measures to protect youth in this respect.

13. The need for trained teachers will increase in greater proportion than the school enrolment as far ahead as I can foresee. That is, as our general population increases, there will be an inevitable increase in school population. Moreover the public is conscious of the growing demand for smaller classes. Notwithstanding all other considerations, the problem of the education of youth is secondary only to those of food, shelter and clothing. The need for teachers will therefore grow continually.

14. People will be more and more education conscious with the years. The day when education stopped at Grade VII has passed in our time. Almost all parents now desire high school education for their children. The day was when the possessor of the B.A. was rare. Fifty years hence holders of the Ph.D. degree will be very common.

15. Care will be taken to diminish the number of "drop outs", those boys and girls who impoverish society so much by failing to develop as they should. It is almost inevitable that when children drop out of school they become a loss both to themselves and to their country. Means will be discovered to help these dogs, lame for one reason or another, over the stiles they need to cross. School policies in our own day have done much to save such children.

16. The philosophy of education will be revised and strengthened. The "whole child" and the individual will be cared for more adequately. The educational philosopher is playing with the world's most precious asset, the growing child. The best brains everywhere must be rallied for his best development.

17. School men and school women will continue to improve procedures. Learning cannot continue at the snail's pace. There will be so much more to learn in this new ABC (atomic, bomb and chemical) age that procedures for learning must be everlastingly refined if children are to get out of school before they are old enough to be wheeled out. Then streamlined procedures will not only be essential but will be demanded of teachers.

18. The schools will keep reasonably up to date. As they have made use of radio, film strips, moving pictures, public address systems and tape recorders, and as they will shortly participate in television experiments, so school men and women will make use of any other machines or gadgets that the genius of man may devise which will help pupils to do more effective work.

19. Schools will continue to be happy and useful places for children to attend. The great philosophers of the past will have increasing influence as the years go by. Though the followers of John Dewey have often strayed from the goals towards which he led, he himself will take his place among the great philosophers of all time. The fact is that the attitude of children towards school has changed from that of indifference or even dread to that of love of school. Their eagerness to go to school and to cooperate in the work of the school is a triumph of this twentieth century. In other quarters, scientists are producing instruments for the destruction of mankind. The school, on the contrary, organized so highly as it is, is probably the most powerful force aiming at the betterment of man. The product of the schools of the future, brought up in such an environment, will direct their efforts increasingly towards the improvement of all the world.

The large majority of our boys and girls are grand. They, however, need the inspiring presence of the teacher daily. No real teacher who loves his work can ever sink too far into despair, but should always keep a level keel. When accusations come, teachers should face them. Teachers are working with the most complex organisms God ever made. His secrets will not all be revealed in a day. It will be a long time before all the mysteries of the mind and heart of that delightfully interesting but most complex and intricate being, the child, will be known. Meantime we must work on and help with research to the best of our ability. In due course we shall develop a reliable system of educational procedure.