

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

STUDIES OF THE
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS OF
SIX MODERN NATIONS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

SINCE the outbreak of the war the attention of the world has been turned to a general survey of its social, economic, and political institutions. Such a stocktaking has been undertaken mainly with the view of eradicating the defects in these institutions that could lead to such a cataclysm, but also to build anew on sounder and surer foundations. The reconstruction that is to follow the war must be based on a more careful scrutiny of what the world has already accomplished, a more penetrating analysis of the interplay of cause and effect in our social organisations, and a close study of the lessons of the war for the re-establishment of the world.

Of the social institutions educational systems have for the first time received attention commensurate with their importance, for education is among the strongest influences which make a man what he is, and in education more than in any other factor lies the hope of the world. Especially have the systems of England and Germany been compared. The two differ in almost every respect. German education is systematised, intelligible, and admittedly efficient. English education is apparently chaotic yet also effective in its own way. Which is the better system? By what educational machinery has Germany instilled in her people the blind faith in a cause that has aligned the world against her? By what system has England trained her young men for leadership?

Similar queries arise when any of the belligerent countries is considered. How has France schooled her sons to such courage and devotion as have astounded the world? How does the United States solve the question of democratic education?

From comparisons such as these there inevitably must follow the conclusion that an educational system is something more than a mere organisation for imparting knowledge to the rising generation. More adequately than any other phase of national life an educational system expresses the innermost beliefs, ideals, and aspirations of a people. It is essential, therefore, in a study which seeks to compare the educational practices of a number of countries to analyse and understand the fundamental

philosophies of which these systems are the expression, and to discover the underlying aims and hopes if we desire to reach an explanation of their several plans of organisation.

Educational systems differ from each other by reason of a number of factors—historical, geographical, ethnological, political, and economic. But more surely and fixedly than these the theory of the state and society held by a people determines the character of its educational institutions. The present volume aims to analyse for the leading countries of the world some of these factors and to present the consequent differentiation of educational systems. The details of educational practice may change from time to time, but the basic principles which are here considered change so slowly that an inquiry into them at this time should offer a contribution of permanent value.

An attempt is made to explain educational principles and tendencies in terms of social, economic, and political antecedents of each country under consideration. Each country has been selected with a definite end in view: Germany as an example of centralisation under absolute control, France as an instance of centralisation under popular control, England as illustrating in her system the principles of individualism and initiative, the United States as embodying the hopes of a democracy, Canada as a country building up an educational system under pioneering conditions of development, and Denmark for the conscious adaptation of an educational system to the needs of an agricultural community. It is not intended to uphold any one of these systems for imitation—an educational system is too vital a part of the social organism to be transplanted or grafted—but it is hoped that by throwing into emphasis certain principles the student and administrator may be enabled to obtain a wider outlook and a firmer grasp of the educational problems of the day on the foundation of which the educational reconstruction that must follow the war may be built.

A word or two as to the title. Comparative education is a phrase recently invented in the United States to cover such studies as are contained in this volume. But the field itself is an old one. The contributors are simply following in the footsteps of Henry Barnard, Horace Mann, Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, Matthew Arnold, and, more recently, Michael E. Sadler. If the writers of the various articles could feel that their efforts approach the standards of excellence set by these pioneering investigators they would be amply repaid for their labours.

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