

## CHAPTER I

### SCHOOL REFORM—GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Reform through development. Teachers and Officials. Economy in administration. Influence of the inspiring teacher. Teaching and experiment. Conferences and their value. Limits of useful inspection. Private schools. Three matters of urgency, viz. (1) Provision of further University Scholarships; (2) Better pay for Assistants in Secondary Schools; (3) Smaller classes in the Elementary School.

The key-note to effective reform of education in this country is development. Schools and teachers must grow in power and usefulness. Hindrances to growth must be removed. More favourable conditions for growth must be established. Various parts of the national system must be vitally connected, and progress in the whole organic unity ensured. But the reform movement must be from within. Unless the organism has the inner power to take up improvement from without, development cannot take place.

Attempts to impose reforms wholly from without, will be as unwelcome as they are likely to be formal and uninspiring. A code has always been a name unmusical in Britons' ears and



I]            GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS            3

unsympathetic officials. He has in many cases been made to feel bitterly that he is the under-dog. His professional attitude is therefore somewhat aggressive. But it is not true to say that he is fighting for the sake of mere obstinacy, or for his own personal gain. He fights too fiercely to be a mere partisan. He is in reality taking a stand for what he considers to be his professional freedom, the right of the creative artist to do his work in his own way. It may be taken that when he attacks inspectors or other officials, he has always some real or fancied hindrance to the progress of his art as a predisposing cause to a state of war. He is in most cases perfectly willing to discuss plans and methods with other brother craftsmen. An argument with an inspector too often takes the form of a defence against attack real or implied, and an official suggestion appears not unseldom to have an element of reproof in it.

This difficulty exists, and it would be worse than foolish to pretend that it does not, as it is a fundamental difficulty. Some wise *modus vivendi* has to be found between authority and individual responsibility. Where it has already been found, the way to reform is open and progress is now being made. The deadest places educationally are those where the hand of authority is heaviest, where schemes are most complete but enthusiasm is absent. "It is the letter that killeth, the spirit that maketh alive." In many instances progress



i]            GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS            5

they may graduate in the class-room before they legislate in the bureau. They will not be ready for such high office at a very early age, any more than judges or bishops are. And the teaching profession will never be as attractive as it might be, so long as the best offices in connection with it are held by those with least practical experience of its work. At present, the field-marshal's baton is not to be found in every common soldier's knapsack.

At the outset, too, the writer must protest at the unnecessary multiplication of junior officials, clerks and others, whose work is strictly speaking *unproductive* from an educational point of view. Much valuable teaching-time all over the country is at present being wasted by teachers who are preparing statistics, which again are to waste money represented by the time of the officials who digest and present them. There is far too much "red-tape" both in local and in Government administrative departments. There must be machinery, but it is only good in relation to the work for which it is called into being. Offices and clerks exist merely for the convenience of the schools where the real work of education is being done. Any money spent unnecessarily in the administrative departments is really taken from the executive departments where it is badly needed. An undue importance is attached in some places to forms, regulations, and instructions. It would sometimes

6 SCHOOL REFORM [CH.

be an advantage to compare the office arrangements of a local educational authority with those of a world-wide engineering firm. In the latter instance, every detail of office expenditure and energy is reduced to the point at which it can be proved to serve best the firm's main purpose, viz., that of engineering. Anything beyond this would merely impede the work, harass the actual constructors, and add to the work's cost.

Most of the difficulties between teachers and officials have come about by the establishment of the bureau. The bureau afterwards increases its staff, adds to its responsibility, and leaves the schools less and less power of personal initiative and judgment as clerks "accumulate" and teachers "decay."

Many authorities, on the grounds of controlling expenditure, control all the details connected with expenditure. They do not say, for example, that the school shall only spend so much on books or stationery, but they control, piece by piece, book by book, almost exercise book by exercise book, the school's requisitions. Fixed Requisition Lists of books and apparatus, to be used as a basis for contracts, in time tend to rob the teachers of all share in the choice of text books or other professional equipment. Interest in these matters is therefore deadened and an atrophy sets in. The net result is another gain to the bureau in power and influence, and another loss to educational zeal.

i]            GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS            7

Attention is drawn at the beginning to this matter of administration, for unless there is established a proper co-operation between the teacher and the administrator, additional grants-in-aid by the Government will be used to increase the cost of the bureau. Could not the Government measure do something to safeguard the rights and professional powers of the Head Master? In any case, would not the Government attempt to decentralise control, to the extent of insisting that all governing bodies or sets of managers should have a real voice in the management of the school they are connected with? At present the power of many such bodies is illusory, and Managers a title given to those with but little power of management.

Let us turn from the officials to the schools. Do our present arrangements make it possible to utilise to the full the reform influences on his fellows of the inspiring and suggestive teacher? Education is so much the result of influence and suggestion, that it is surely of the utmost importance to secure the maximum transmission of the best influences.

No one can honestly say that at present any serious steps are taken to secure this. Students of the various training colleges preparing for the Government certificate, or a University teaching diploma, have a privilege granted to them at a stage of their training when they are not fully qualified to use it, which is denied to their





I] GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS 9

any of our class-rooms? The pupils of course: but there is not any general handing-on of successful procedure except through the training college facilities.

There ought to be more interpenetration of educational influence. Teachers ought to be allowed, nay *compelled*, to visit the schools of our continental neighbours, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and France. There is an additional and special reason why this plan should be encouraged in the case of teachers of foreign languages. Indeed something in this direction is done. But it ought to be done more widely and on general principles of observation and enquiry, even more than for specific hints on language teaching. The Government might make grants in aid of this interchange of educational experience. Just now most of the more highly specialised and technical development of teachers is gained at their own expense, out of their own meagre salaries.

At present, interchange of experience is not common even within the limits of a single town, although an epidemic of measles has been known to send wandering bands of teachers to put in a little time at other establishments, during the closing of their own.

Of course, at the base of this suggestion for the creation of further opportunities for teachers of seeing high grade professional work, is the belief that such opportunities will be welcomed by the

10                      SCHOOL REFORM                      [CH.

keen people. There are many indications of a great national interest in experiment and research, especially if the latter is associated with adventure. Experimental Psychology has given a new set of data for teachers to consider.

But the fullest advantages of an alliance between the psychologist and the teacher have been scarcely realised. Yet it is probable that to psychology teachers must go, in the future, for a knowledge of what it is possible for education to do for their pupils, and even, to a considerable extent, for some indication of the means by which it can best be done.

“How far may education utilise instinct?” “Is there such a thing as ‘general training’?” “To what extent is education affected by emotion?” These are some of the problems common to both teachers and psychologists, and in which both are mutually interested. Educative theory and procedure must in the future be, and has already in some places been, profoundly influenced by such work as that of Mosso on Fatigue, Binet on Suggestion, Ebbinghaus and Meumann on Memory, and Thorndike on Formal Training.

To link up everyday educational procedure with a rapidly advancing experimental science would be a great gain, and the Government may do worse than support Chairs of Experimental Psychology in the Universities, making it obligatory for the new professors to give lectures at times, at which