The principles of education

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BEVERLEY EDUCATIONAL SERIES

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THE
PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

BY

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EDITOR’S PREFACE

During the later decades of the nineteenth century philosophy and psychology dominated the theory of education. From the principles of these two fields methods were deduced for which the claim was made that they produced the best results in instructional practice.

During the twentieth century, however, experimental science has been the dominant method. Without regard for the philosophical point of view, specific methods of teaching, of supervision, and of administration have been studied in localized situations to discover the better practice. During these two latter decades a very considerable body of technique has been collected and to this constant accretions are being made. The force of the scientific impulse is, fortunately, not yet expended and it is confidently expected to continue indefinitely with increasing value.

But since the tendency of science is to produce a body of technique, particle by particle, as investigators study small individual and relatively isolated problems, central attitudes and principles are temporarily ignored. The result of this is that the orientation of the whole mass of technique is lost sight of and those who practice do so without clear ultimate purposes in mind.

With some subjects, such as the physical sciences, this tendency takes care of itself but in those sciences which treat of mind and men, so many uncontrolled factors enter into the direction and execution of practice that some guiding objectives are necessary in the present incomplete condition of knowledge and, in all prob-
ability, will always be necessary no matter how far the scientific development of the field may be carried.

Moreover, the scientific attitude toward education which has substituted facts for opinions so satisfactorily in many cases, produces in the mind of the scientist and his followers a disesteem for philosophy. A fact is a fact, but a philosophical principle is an opinion and as such is treated as being neither trustworthy nor necessary. Consequently there is a distinct tendency among the less thoughtful educators at the present time to ignore principles of education.

If, however, we look upon philosophy as an activity of the human mind which seeks to take stock of what has been accomplished and to determine its meaning, to disentangle the important from the unimportant, and to set all the items in some perspective, it is evident that it has a very definite place in education.

Into such a conflict between a mental science with uncontrolled factors and scientific laboratory investigation wherein scant patience is frequently shown toward those who pause to get a perspective in the presence of a great body of unorganized facts, the appearance of this book, which deals with the principles of education, is timely. The author has accepted a point of view which he believes, and which to the editor appears to be, a useful interpretation of the tendencies of educational thought and effort in this generation, and has endeavored to organize the isolated facts and practices into an organic unit. It will not only help the college student to orient himself in the midst of the complexities of such an unorganized field but will also provide the investigator and college teacher with, at least, a point of departure in his thinking.
AUTOR’S PREFACE

This book is the outgrowth of twelve years of classroom instruction, supplemented by other work in the training of teachers. It is an attempt to present with logical cogency a simple and definite system of principles for guiding educational thought and practice. Elaboration useless for this practical purpose has been avoided.

Attention should be called especially to two characteristics of this discussion of the principles of education. (1) Man is here regarded as a person who seeks to attain purposes through means of control and also as a psychophysical organism in a process of adjustment to environment through stimuli and responses; but these two points of view, the confusion of which has led to much erratic thinking in the field of education, have been kept distinct. (2) The importance in the educative process of the appreciation of values is here emphasized as much as is the importance of the knowledge of facts, by which appreciated values may be attained. In this connection, the essential nature and function of history and of literature and the other fine arts are explained, and the methods in accordance with which this subject matter should be taught are definitely presented.

Quotations used in this book are evidence of my indebtedness to various authors. I should acknowledge especial indebtedness to my former teachers, including Professors Paul H. Hanus, Hugo Münsterberg, and Josiah Royce at Harvard University; Professors John
Dewey, John Angus MacVannel, Frank M. McMurry, and Edward L. Thorndike at Teachers College, Columbia University; and Professor John P. Gordy at Ohio State University. My former colleague Professor W. W. Charters of the Carnegie Institute of Technology has read the entire manuscript and has made valuable suggestions for its improvement. Dean Frank Thilly of Cornell University and my colleagues Professors Max F. Meyer and George H. Sabine have given helpful criticisms of parts of the discussion. I am indebted to my colleagues Professors Frederick M. Tisdel and Robert M. Dewey, who have read the manuscript and are responsible for much improvement in the matter of expression. Acknowledgment is due my former colleague Dean Frank P. Graves of the University of Pennsylvania and his wife, Helen Wadsworth Graves, who have reviewed the proof of the entire book. Acknowledgment for helpful criticism of the manuscript and proof is due my wife, Edith Logan Coursault. A final indebtedness I owe to my parents, who encouraged me to prepare for the profession of teaching.

**JESSE H. COURSAULT.**

*Columbia, Missouri, July, 1920.*
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SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS BOOK AS A TEXTBOOK

This book is adaptable to students in various stages of advancement. The student unacquainted with psychology may omit the sections in which the principles of education are discussed from the point of view of natural science and still find a complete connected account of these principles presented from the point of view to which he has been accustomed in everyday life. Other omissions that may be made in the case of students whose knowledge of education is very limited will be evident to the teacher.

The introductory chapter, which explains the purpose and plan of this book, is necessarily more abstract than are the subsequent chapters. As shown on pages 21 and 22, the systematic presentation of the principles of education begins with Chapter II. The student whose previous experience has not prepared him to understand fully the introductory chapter should, therefore, study it at first not for complete mastery, but for whatever insight into the purpose and plan of the subsequent discussion he can gain by the careful reading of it. After he has studied the rest of the book, he will be prepared to understand fully this chapter and should then re-read it.

Each chapter and section is prefaced by a brief statement of the essential ideas contained in it. At first the student should regard these statements tentatively as propositions to be explained and verified. After he has