Fundamentals of education

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FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATION
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PREFACE

The purpose of this volume is to interpret present-day educational problems from the standpoint of pragmatic philosophy. The discussion is centered chiefly on two main topics; viz., the aims or ideals which should be dominant in education, and the nature of the mind or intelligence with which education has to deal. The book is written in the conviction that educational theory and practice have been vitiated by preconceptions which were historically inevitable but which are unjustifiable in the light of modern knowledge. These preconceptions must be eliminated if education is to make its proper contribution towards the enrichment of life and towards making the world safe for democracy. The development during recent years of scientific method in the field of education has brought with it a comparative neglect of the more fundamental issues. For the time being this shift of emphasis towards scientific investigation was probably desirable. Its effect has been to place educational research on a permanent basis. But unless the study of detailed problems is properly correlated with theory, there is serious danger that education will simply become more complicated, and perhaps more mechanical, and not an agency of progress and reform.
PREFACE

In preparing this book I have been under constant and very extensive obligation to the writings of Professor John Dewey. I also owe a great debt to Professor W. C. Bagley, who, through his published works and through personal contact, has been the source of much suggestion and incentive, without which this book would perhaps never have been written.

B. H. B.
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The serious study of educational problems may be undertaken from several points of departure, each of which represents a special point of view and, generally speaking, a distinctive method of investigation. During the past twenty years notable progress has been made in the "scientific" study of education, and the literature in this field, especially in connection with educational psychology and educational measurements, has now grown to large proportions. A second type of study which employs the historical method and aims to trace the genesis of educational theory and practice has been much less in evidence, although a few contributions of outstanding significance have been made in recent years. A third field even less conspicuous in so far as the number of its recent contributions is concerned is that which the present volume represents,—the philosophy of education.

The teacher will profit by an acquaintance with all three of these fields. Certain of his problems can be solved only by the type of objective analysis and experimentation that the scientific method involves. He wishes to know how well he has accomplished what he has set out to do: the measurement of his work is his recourse here, and the scientific study of education will
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furnish him with at least a few dependable measures. He wishes to know how to classify his pupils and how to treat the various groups: the science of educational psychology will give him many helpful suggestions. He wishes to know how teachers in the past have met and solved their problems: the history of education will supply this information.

There are, however, questions which neither the science of education nor the history of education will satisfactorily solve. Science will help the teacher to realize his aims and ideals; history will tell him the aims and the ideals that his predecessors have striven to realize and how they went about it; but what should be the aims and ideals back of his own efforts? What should present-day education attempt? What standards of value should determine the materials of the curriculum, the organization of his school, his methods of instruction, his own intimate, and probably influential relations with his pupils? These are not only recurring questions; they are fundamental questions.

A study of the philosophy of education will not and should not answer all of these questions for the teacher, but it should do much to enable him to answer them himself. This has always been the spirit of Professor Bode's own teaching, and he has succeeded admirably in making this the dominating spirit of his book.

In American education there is a growing tendency to give to those actually engaged in the work of teaching a larger and larger voice in determining the edu-