

## A STUDY

## The Systems Of Education

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The author, in a series of articles, examines the systems of education in a number of developed countries and China. In this first article he studies the American system.

**E**ducation, a lamp in the dark, removes ignorance and spreads knowledge which is the source of power and success in all walks of life. The state of backwardness or progress of a country is measured in terms of her educational and cultural standards. Today education is considered the best investment and the secret of success of the developed countries on all fronts. Although education consists of the enrolment system, the length of schooling, learning materials curriculum, teaching and examination methods, and the mental outlook of teachers all this is by no means the whole story. In reality it reflects the politics which it originates from and serves. The machine that runs the country decides who and what is to be taught and how and why, and how it is to be used. Education reflects the state of society. It would be fair to say, that academic institutions have been the leading sector of education and culture. The state of education can be changed and the key is: What class exercises the leadership and what line is followed. It may be of place, worth and interest to examine the education system in the developed countries.

## USA

The USA is composed of 50 states. The responsibility of organizing and administering education rests with the individual states, but federal funds are available for its improvement. Education is free except in private schools. Since the year 1918 school attendance between 6 and 16 years of age has been required by law in every state of the USA. But the period of compulsory education varies between states.

Education in the USA comprises three levels: elementary secondary and higher education and she has a huge network of educational establishments. These comprise the nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, intermediate schools, high schools (Junior and Senior), schools for adults, junior colleges, technical schools professional schools vocational schools normal schools, graduate schools and universities.

There are some 22,000 school districts in the United States. In 1974 there were 91,200 elementary and secondary schools, and 2,665 accredited colleges and universities. In a country with a population of 205 million (1972) education directly involves one person in three. During the 1970-71 school year it was estimated that 790,650 bachelor's and first professional degrees were conferred on students as well as 212,000 master's degree and 29,000 doctorates. The pupil-teacher ratio in 1969 was 24.8 to 1 for elementary schools

and 20-to-1 for secondary schools. Of the colleges (in the U.S.) 1487 are co-educational 22.2 are for men only and 248 are only for women.

**PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION:** This education is imparted in nursery schools and kindergartens. The few nursery schools enrol children between the ages of 2 and 4. A child's first introduction to formal education is usually in kindergartens that enrol the 5-year old children. The pre-school education prepares children for the elementary school. The programmes are designed to help the child grow in self-reliance, learn to get along with others, and form good work and play habits.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:** Where kindergartens are not maintained children generally enter the first grade at about the age of 6 years. The main purpose of the elementary school is the general intellectual and social development of the child from 6 to 12 or 14 years of age. Curricula vary with the organization and educational aims of the individual schools and community. The more or less traditional programme consists of teaching prescribed subject matter.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL:** In the secondary school field there is a variety of types of organization. The four-year high school is preceded, by an eight-grade elementary school. The undivided junior-senior high school usually a six-grade school, is preceded by a six-grade elementary school. Besides there are separately organized three years senior high school.

Secondary schools are organized on a departmental plan; that is, each teacher has one subject or several related subjects. Most pupils follow a course that includes English, Science, Social studies, Mathematics, and Physical education. Elective subjects may be chosen in the fields of foreign languages, fine arts and prevocational training. At this stage pupils begin to plan their careers and need to select subjects that will be useful in their chosen work. In addition to the basic subjects—English, Social, Studies and Physical Education—the larger school systems may offer three or more programmes: academic, vocational, and general; sometimes given in separate schools. The academic programme is designed to prepare students for college. The vocational programme may give training in four fields—agriculture, the trades and industries home economics, and business education. The third programme, a general or comprehensive programme combines features of the academic and vocational types. College bound students also generally take college admission tests during their last two years in high school.

**HIGHER EDUCATION:** The decentralized character of the American educational system is greatest at the higher educational level. This is principally because private higher education in the United States predates public higher education. American higher education refers to study beyond the secondary school level and almost always presupposes that a student has undertaken 12 previous years of study.

In the U.S. the terms "college" and "university" are often used interchangeably, although the former often is but a part of the latter. An American college typically offers a unique blend of natural and social sciences and humanistic studies. Young men and women students, generally 18 to 22 years old, attend classes for approximately four years to receive if they successfully complete the requirements, a bachelor's degree in arts or sciences. A university on the other hand, is usually composed of an undergraduate college of arts and sciences, plus graduate schools and professional schools or faculties.

Higher education, in general, consists of two broad fields: liberal arts and professional. The two-year junior colleges or community colleges for the most part locally controlled and predominately public financed, have a dual role. They offer either studies leading to technical and semi-professional occupations or they offer studies which will prepare students to enroll in four-year or degree-granting institutions. Therefore they enroll students with a wide range of abilities and interests.

The liberal arts college is also a peculiarly American institution. It takes two general forms. It may be one of the constituent units—a school or college—of a complex university or it may be an independent organization. Study during the standard four-year liberal arts course (leading to the degree of bachelor of arts or bachelor of science) is known as 'undergraduate' work. The first two years of the undergraduate study have come to be known as 'Junior College' or 'lower division' work. Usually the junior college is co-educational.

lent to the first two years of the four-year college course.

Study beyond the bachelor's degree is known as 'graduate' work. Completion of a minimum of one year of graduate study, very often including a written thesis, lead to a master of arts or master of science degree. Beyond that point a minimum of two additional years of graduate study including knowledge of two modern languages other than English, and the preparation of a dissertation based on original study and research, and passing written and oral examinations on the candidate's field of concentration, are necessary to earn the doctor's degree.

The university college of liberal arts often serves students in parallel undergraduate professional colleges, such as engineering or business administration, by giving them courses in the basic disciplines. It—as well as its independent counterpart—also provides pre-professional training of four years or less for students who proceed to the advanced professional schools, such as law and medicine. And it also offers a liberal education for students who do not enter either professional or graduate school. Preparation for the various professions, such as law, medicine, dentistry, engineering teaching, theology, business administration, journalism and others is offered in professional school, most of which are constituents of universities (a university composed of undergraduate college of liberal arts, a graduate school, and several professional schools); but some of them are separate institutions confining their work to a single profession.

Schools of law, medicine, theology, dentistry, and veterinary medicine require from two to four years of liberal arts study prior to admission. The other professional schools, with some exceptions, require only high-school graduation for admission. The length of the professional course is generally four (in law three years; in some school of pharmacy, three years).

Generally each institution of higher education in the USA is governed by a board of prominent citizens from various walks of life, who collectively constitute a corporation whereby the institution has a legal personality.

On the average the annual tuition charge to university students is \$527 at a four-year state university and \$2,161 at a private university. Private colleges and universities do not receive much public financial support and, therefore, charge higher fees than state-supported universities. Many students obtain part-time employment to finance their studies while others receive (See Page 8)

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scholarships and loans to help meet living expenses.

**TEACHER EDUCATION** All states require a license or certificate to teach in the public elementary and secondary schools. The bachelor's degree is required for it. Many local school system set standards that are higher than the minimum state requirements.

Both public and private colleges and universities are approved or accredited for teacher education. The characteristic teacher education programme is four or five years in length. It comprises a combination of academic subjects and professional courses such as methods of teaching and educational psychology.

During the later half of the nineteenth century there grew a considerable number of normal schools for the preparation of elementary school teachers, admitting high school graduates and offering a course of two or three years leading to a diploma. Nearly all of them have now extended their courses to four years leading to a bachelor's degree, and many have added coordinative divisions of liberal arts off the degree of bachelor of education and some of them a fifth year of study leading to a master's degree.

**ADULT EDUCATION:** Adult education in the U.S. is carried

on by a variety of both public and private agencies and for various education levels. More than 13 million adults, nearly 11% of the American population over 21 resume their education after years, sometimes decades, of intervening occupations.

There are many children for whom some adjustment must be made in the regular school programme because of a mental, physical or emotional condition deviating seriously from the normal. In addition, educational activities are carried on in many hospitals and homes for crippled otherwise physically incapacitated children.

Practically all state departments of education furnish leadership in the fields of school health service and physical education. The schools work with the children, parents, physicians, dentists and public health departments in the health service programme. Emphasis is placed on determining the health status of each pupil encouraging the correlation or remediable disabilities, and helping pupils understand the importance of living healthily. The tendency is towards complete periodical physical examinations on all school children. There is an upward trend towards a daily period of physical education.

**STATUS OF TEACHERS:** All states have some legislation affecting teachers' welfare; all states make provision for teachers' retirement; 35 states report some type of statewide

provisions governing dismissal of teachers; a majority have maximum salary schedules; and 19 report statewide sick leave benefits. The average 1971 annual salary for elementary school teachers was \$9,025; for secondary school teachers \$9,540. In higher education, college staff earned a median salary of \$11,745 with professors (the highest academic rank) earning a median of \$16,799.

## CURRICULA

Curriculum material in early elementary education are developed by State departments of education and local school systems as guide for public school teachers at the kindergarten-primary level. The curriculum guides for early childhood education frequently include material on the characteristics of children at 3, 4 and 5 years of age as background for the suggested experiences described under the various subject matter areas: art, music, sciences, language, arts, social studies and good health habits. These guides are developed in the light of research findings in child growth and development.

Every school whether public or private uses some method of reporting pupil progress to parents. Such methods vary widely. Some types of reports give only grades in subjects. Others evaluate the child's behaviour and efforts. The parent-teacher conference is being used more and more as a means of interpreting to parents the

type of progress a child is making.

The elementary learning aims at physical development, health, and body care; individual social and emotional development; ethical behaviour; standards, values, social relations; the social world; the physical world aesthetic development; communications and quantitative relationships.

**OBJECTIVES:** The broad purpose of higher education in the United States is to develop the special abilities of young people so that they can take their place effectively in a democratic, highly complex society. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing practical skills and inculcating self-help attitudes which will facilitate the achievement of a maximum welfare society through the cooperative efforts of individuals and groups. Historically the objectives of higher education in the United States have thus been more pragmatic than academic.

A century ago, higher education in the United States was "modified" to reflect the new rule of science, the rapid industrial advance of the nation, the surging populism of the people. Now it needs to be more completely "humanized" in the sense. In both American secondary and higher education, curricula have been changed to introduce a much more universal approach to world culture. The new educational life style is person-oriented not institution oriented.

(To be continued)