

BOOKS

John Vaizey. *Education in the Modern World*. New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1967. Pp. 254. \$2.45 (Paperback).

This book is one of the volumes in an international series of attractively produced paperbacks called the 'World University Library.' The series deals with many subjects under broad-field sub-series such as economics and social studies, history, language and literature, the arts, psychology and human biology, physical science and mathematics, and applied science. It is now published in eight western countries. Its aim, says an introductory note, "is to provide authoritative introductory books for university students which will be of interest also to the general reader."

Two things that immediately strike one about the book are that it is published under the sub-series "Economics and Social Studies" and that the author is an economist by profession. This should no more be a matter of great surprise or even extensive comment since education as a social institution and as a social force has become a focus of major interest to many social scientists in the last decade. John Vaizey's interest in education is, of course, quite well-known.

The book is devoted to a discussion of how educational systems are taking an increasingly active part in shaping modern societies and how, in that process, these systems themselves are undergoing revolutionary changes. In the author's words, the purpose of the book "is to explore the reasons for this process of change and to get at some of the underlying trends in education which are masked by the ebb and flow of events" (p. 8). This exploration takes the author to every continent on the globe. He sees certain trends and problems and illustrates their significance by referring to at least twenty-nine countries. He seeks to convey the importance of these trends and problems from the disciplinary perspectives of history, economics, sociology, psychology and political science. Some specific examples may be appropriate at this point. Expansion in enrollment occurring at all levels of the educational system and a rising inclination to use education as one instrument for promoting economic betterment and/or a sense of security are two trends the author sees. He documents these trends by the use of comparative statistics (pp. 124, 144) and by referring to the manpower approach used in several countries (chs. 3 and 9). The author discusses, among others, questions such as: "Is social class the main determinant of a pupil's educational progress?" and "Should there be a common school for all pupils at the secondary level?" Studies undertaken in the United Kingdom and trends

observed in several OECD countries in Europe are cited in this connection.

Eight of the ten chapters in the book proceed in this fashion, i.e., by the identification of trends or themes and by a "selective and impressionistic" (p. 8) discussion of their importance. Chapter 5 and most of Chapter 6 are devoted to a more systematic treatment of the educational systems of the United States, the U.S.S.R., France, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden. These centrally placed chapters serve as a bridge for, and help to make more concrete, the thematic discussion of the four chapters that precede and succeed them.

The reviewer finds two overarching themes in the book. The first theme is that in educational thinking and practice "there is a growing unity, a growing response to similar situations which is leading to less diversity" (pp. 15-16). Vaizey's evidence for this growing unity consists of instances such as the increasing child-centredness of pedagogical practices and techniques (p. 13) and the greater acceptance of the idea of a common school for secondary students in European countries (p. 159).

We may note here that terms such as 'trends,' 'developing nations,' 'developed nations,' etc. are admittedly large-scale abstractions which any scholar may find fault with. It is not difficult to point, for example, to some areas in a 'developing' nation which are more advanced than some areas in a 'developed' nation, or to demonstrate that today's developed societies were yesterday's underdeveloped ones, as Vaizey indeed does (pp. 86-92). The ultimate justification for employing these abstractions, we must agree, is the same as that used for *any* large-scale abstraction in the world of scholarship, namely, that they help us to make some sense out of myriads of otherwise discrete items of information.

In this sense, we may concede that there is indeed a growing similarity of response to educational questions in the developed nations taken as a group. However, responses of underdeveloped countries to questions about pedagogy and common secondary schooling are likely to be significantly different until they reach a higher level of development. For example, in developed societies, the trend may well be toward individuation of the teaching function (see Ch. 9) made possible partly by the introduction of technological inventions such as teaching machines, closed-circuit television, language laboratories and so on. However, it would be fanciful to claim or imply (the book does the latter) that this trend is observable or is even around the corner in underdeveloped countries. For the foreseeable future teaching in underdeveloped countries is likely to remain formal—i.e., highly organized, based on rigid syllabi and employing rigid methods, stressing among other things memorization, external examinations and tight discipline. This would be so primarily because underdeveloped countries, beset with financial difficulties, cannot yet afford to leave behind formal teaching procedures which cost less money and introduce the kind of teaching for meaning

that developed countries have relatively recently become able to afford. Vaizey is able to see growing unity in such matters mainly because his perceptions are based on data from the developed countries. This, of course, is another way of stating that although the author makes references to underdeveloped countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Pakistan in his book, his discussion omits systematic consideration of what is sometimes called the third world.

The second theme in the book is that liberal attitudes and scientific thinking are pointing in the same direction, for instance, toward "an idea of a school which is far more 'free'—that is, where there is far more freedom of choice . . . than has been customary" (p. 13). Apart from the fact that the objection concerning the first theme is relevant here too, one may wonder whether this is an empirically verifiable trend or whether it is an expression of the author's wish to see such a trend take place.

These observations notwithstanding, as an introduction to the place and problems of education in the advanced nations with some contrasting views on education in poor societies, the book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the subject. Alongside comparable volumes such as Edmund J. King's *World Perspectives in Education* Vaizey's book, in the opinion of this reviewer, stands very well. It is more readable, it pays more systematic attention to education from the disciplinary perspectives of economics (particularly Chs. 3 & 9) and sociology (particularly Ch. 7), and it is very attractively produced (large type, 57 photographs and 27 colour diagrams). It may be pointed out, however, that professionals in the fields of psychology and sociology may raise their eyebrows at the following two statements: "Educational Psychology has fully and immediately (at least in the leading centres) assimilated and applied the conceptual and empirical findings of ordinary psychology" (p. 17), and "it is in education that they [sociologists] are making what is perhaps their biggest contribution to knowledge and policy" (p. 23).

Education in the Modern World is not—as introductory books often tend to be—an impersonal and omnibus mishmash of bowdlerized materials. Vaizey has a point of view and he is not afraid to let it become evident. His style is on the whole direct, simple, and forceful. These qualities sustain and stimulate the reader's interest throughout.

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