The Comprehensive High School Revisited: Issues of Development and Dissemination

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The comprehensive high school has not received its due from educational andcurriculum historians in the United States. In this paper an attempt is made to revisit theformative years of the comprehensive high school, roughly the period 1905 to 1930, focusingon four issues pertaining to its development and dissemination: (1) the debate over a dualversus unified system of secondary education; (2) the social efficiency interpretation of thecomprehensive model; (3) George Counts and the comprehensive high school; and (4) dissemination of the model as documented in surveys of offerings and enrollments. In eachof these areas the aim is to document developments connected with the comprehensive highschool previously ignored or under-investigated and to evaluate prevailing interpretations ofand attitudes toward the comprehensive school against available evidence. As such, thispaper represents a continuation of my previous historical study of the comprehensive highschool in the United States (Wraga, 1994a).

The Development of the Comprehensive High School

While the comprehensive high school emerged from the common school tradition that extended back into the nineteenth century, its development during the early twentieth century was conditioned by the needs and realities of a modern industrial democracy. The common school ideal of providing a common education to all of the people necessitated the unification of academic and vocational studies under a single roof. This development happened in the context of and was influenced by two trends in American education at that time: the debate over a dual versus a unified system of secondary education and the prevailing concern with "social efficiency" in schooling.

The Dual versus Unified System Debate

The fact that the American comprehensive high school emerged from a debate over whether the United States should adopt a European, class-based system of secondary education or depart from that tradition r and develop its own unitary system is acknowledged in the historical literature more often than it is documented. Indeed, even the degree of acknowledgement varies, some historians according the debate paramount importance (Tanner& Tanner, 1990), others mentioning it virtually in passing (Cremin; Krug, 1964; Kliebard, 1986). Krug (1964), for example, in his extensive examination of vocational education, acknowledged the controversy over the dual versus unitary control of vocational and academic secondary education, but skirted the issue of proposals to emulate European class-based systems, particularly Germany's. Simmons (1960) provides a balanced account, but cites only four examples of arguments favoring a dual system as representative of the wider debate. Our goal here is to provide further, though certainly not inclusive, documentation of this critical debate. This is important because it calls into question historical interpretations that depict the Cardinal Principles report and the comprehensive model narrowly as social control/efficiency mechanisms that capitulated to the needs of business.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century there was widespread agreement among educators and businessmen that vocational education should function as a component of secondary education, but considerable controversy as to whether vocational and academic education should be under separate or dual control. Some proponents of industrial education called for a system modeled after Germany's dual system. Edwin G. Cooley, former Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, was a leading advocate of a dual system that emulated Germany's approach to industrial education. His work with the Commercial Club of Chicago was widely cited at the time. Citing changes in home education, the decline of the apprenticeship, urbanization, the need to make better use of human resources, and the acclaimed success of the German system of industrial education, Cooley proposed a dual system of American education in which at age fourteen, students leave elementary school either for college preparation in traditional academic secondary schools or for industrial education provided through a variety of options. As Cooley (1912) put it,

> Separate schools are necessary whose equipment, corps of teachers, and board of administration must be in the closest possible relation to the occupations. In such schools the applications of general education to vocational work can be made only by men who know the vocations. The boards of education administering such institutions must give them far greater attention on the practical side than the ordinary boards of education need to do in the case of academic schools. (p. 449)

Cooley sponsored a bill in Illinois that would provide separate control of industrial education and in effect would have created a dual system of secondary education in that state. The bill was opposed by educators, among them John Dewey, and ltimately defeated.

Another notable example of German emulation was Bulletin 1913, No. 19 of the U.S. Bureau of Education, entitled German Industrial Education and its Lessons for the United States, prepared by Holmes Beckwith. Beckwith (1913) began his report with an examination of the status of industrial education in the United States and followed with a detailed discussion of the origins and status of industrial education in Germany, featuring programs in Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich. He explained how, "At his tenth year, the parents of a boy in the common school [Volkschule] must decide whether he is to continue his schooling beyond the compulsory attendance in that school" and described the various academic and vocational options available after that point. Assessing the effectiveness of the German system, Beckwith concluded, "The German industrial schools are achieving in large measure he purpose for which they were established--industrial efficiency" (p. 131).

True to his introductory remark that German industrial education "has much to teach us," (p. 7), Beckwith (1913) concluded his report with a discussion of ways in which the United States could benefit from the German approach. These included reviving the apprenticeship and offering a variety of industrial education options (such as trade schools, industrial schools, and improvement schools). In the last paragraph of the report, Beckwith recommended, "The control of the industrial schools of all types is best vested, according to German and other experience, in some body or bodies not dominated by schoolmen, but which receives the aid of competent educational experts" (143). Beckwith would depart from the German model only by representing workers as well as employers on boards controlling industrial education and by providing more specialized preparation to suit the nature of America's industrial economy.

With the outbreak of World War I advocates of industrial education in the United States distanced themselves from the German model; many, however, continued to promote the dual system (Simmons, 1960 p. 89). Proceedings of the National Society for the romotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE) often featured endorsements of trade schools conducted under the auspices of manufacturers. Miller P. Higgins (1908), President of Norton Companies in Worcester Massachusetts, for example, advocated in 1908, without reference to Germany, that upon completion of the ninth grade boys not bound for college would attend a trade school "established and managed largely by manufacturers and mechanics" (p. 22). While the Board of Trustees would be "composed of business men, manufacturers, and educators," (p. 23) control would largely emanate from the businessmen and manufacturers in order to correct for the overly "theoretical" preparation afforded by traditional schools conducted by educators (pp. 23, 20). In 1916 W. Stanwood Field (1916), Director of Evening and Continuation Schools in Boston, argued in the pages of *School and Society* for a dual system of secondary education, with no reference to Germany, but with great likeness to the dual system advocated during this period by Cooley and by the National Association of Manufacturers.

In 1915 the Committee on Industrial Education of the National Association of Manufacturers maintained that,

> The National Association of Manufacturers has always emphasized the necessity that industrial education be under the immediate direction of representatives of employers and skilled employees in a separate board appointed by the general local board, and in that respect having somewhat the character of a "committee with power." (p. 19)

Figure 1 (page 75) represents the dual system of secondary education endorsed by NAM; Figure 2 (page 76) depicts the separate control of academic and vocational education. The Committee concluded in the report that, "Business men must largely determine the character of these schools if they are to be worth while" (p. 22). Throughout this period, NAM was one of the most vigorous promoters of a dual system of secondary education with the industrial branch largely under the control of business interests (see also National Association of Manufacturers, 1913, pp. 30-31).

The urgency of the dual versus unified system debate is evidenced by the attention afforded it by editorial boards of education journals. The *School Review,* for example, in 1913 reported on a statement of principles by NSPIE that endorsed a dual system and concluded that "it must be obvious to anyone who follows the discussion of industrial education in this country that it will be a great misfortune if a breach is created" ("Shall We Have . . .," 1913, p. 273). In 1915, *School and Society* summarized arguments on either side of the issue using briefs prepared by the Bureau of Education without taking a position ("The Dual Control . . .," 1915). That same year Manual Training and Vocational Education also summarized both sides of the issue using the same Bureau of Education source, concluding that, "The members of the editorial staff of this magazine have gone on record favoring a form of administration by which all forms of education supported by public taxation shall be under a single management" ("Editorial," 1915, p. 429). Also in 1915, *The Elementary*

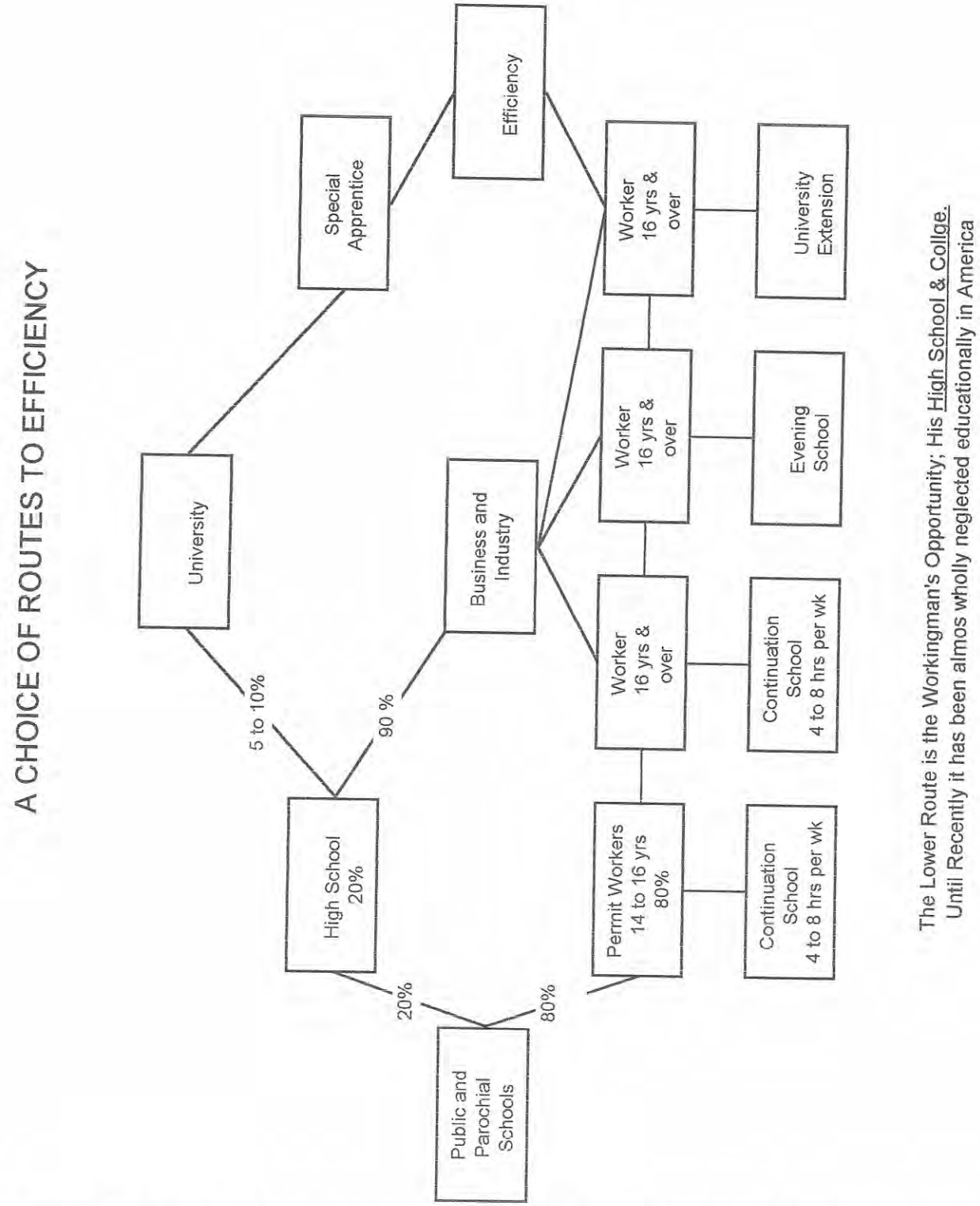

Figure 1. The dual system of secondary education promoted by the National Association of Manufacturers. Source: Committee on Industrial Education (1915). *Report of the committee on industrial education*. Twentieth Annual Convention of the National Association of Manufactureres. NY: National Association of Manufacturers, p. 4.

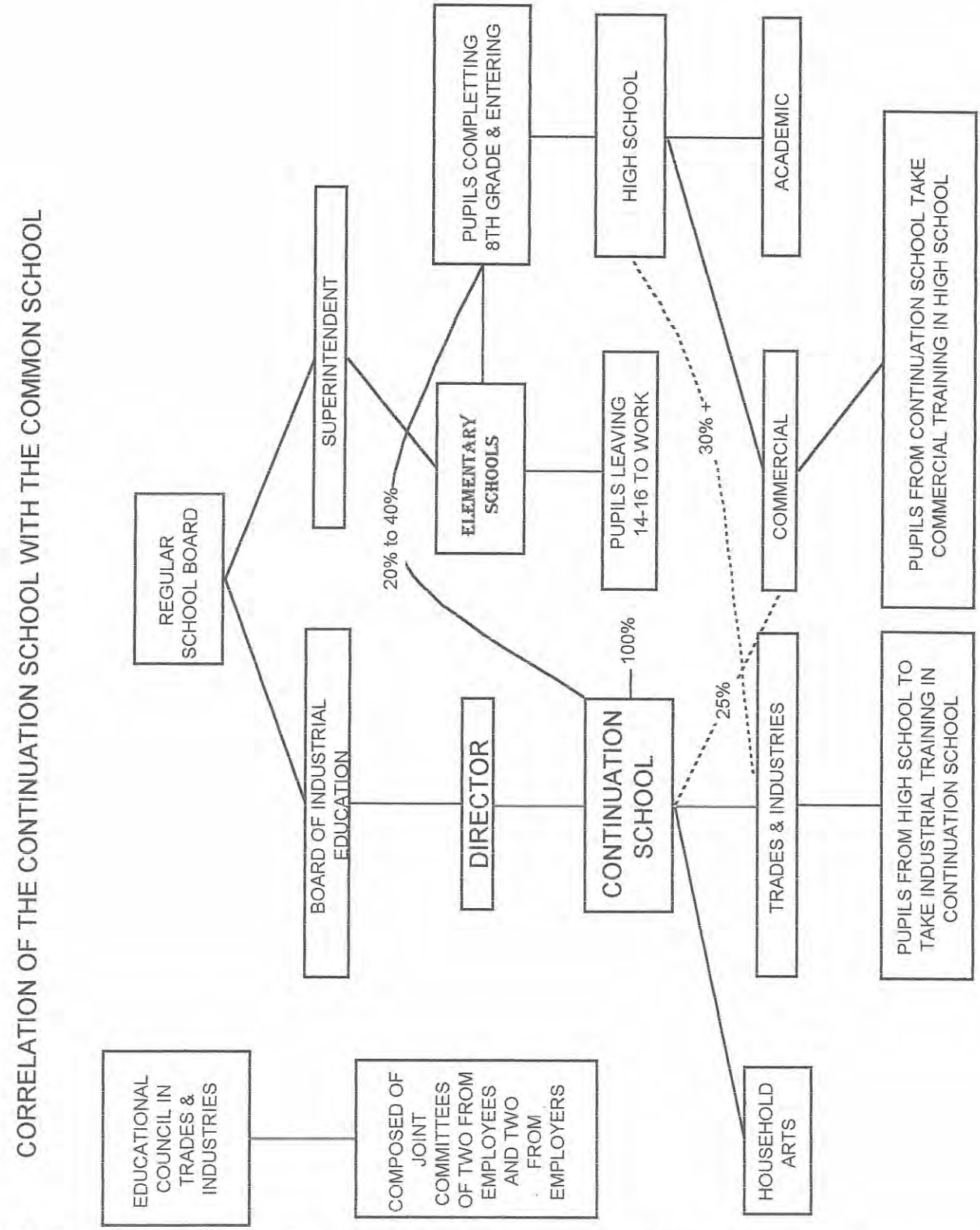

Figure 2. Dual control of secondary education promoted by the National Association of Manufacturers. Source: Committee on Industrial Education (1915). *Report of the committee on industrial education*. Twentieth Annual Convention of the National Association of Manufactureres. NY: National Association of Manufacturers, p. 13.

School Journal, pointing to the Cooley bill in Illinois and to other states where the "menace is not so obvious," stated concern about "a strong tendency to put the control of vocational education into hands that are inexpert and into the power of those who are too often interested in exploiting children and young people for commercial purposes" ("Unit and Dual Control," 1915, p. 450). The editors then proceeded to present only the arguments against dual control.

Since the issue was being debated not only in educational circles but also in many state legislatures,2 it is not surprising that opinion journals also devoted space to the dual versus unitary system debate. The famous exchange between Dewey and Snedden in the 15 May 1915 issue of *The New Republic* is the most frequently cited debate outside an educational journal. In the 26 June issue the Editors of *The New Republic* endorsed Dewey's position in a discussion of competing plans for industrial education in New York City ("The Issue . . .," 1915). The "Ettinger" plan was characterized as similar to the German model in that the student chose a "cultural" or "industrial" path by the end of the seventh grade. The "Gary" plan was depicted in a Deweyan light, as viewing "the world outside the school not as a collection of trades, but as a community" in which "the vocational training features are only practicable if all the other liberally varied "cultural" features are put into operation at the same time" (p. 92). The editors held that the Ettinger plan "makes an undemocratic class-division in the public school" and characterized such approaches to industrial education as "concerned neither with genuine educational interests nor with genuine industrial interests, but only with the interest of the employer" (p. 92). The editors of *The Nation* had earlier warned of class divisions inherent in separating industrial from liberal education ("Vocational Education," 1913).

In summary, the early twentieth-century debate over a dual versus a unitary school system probably enjoyed more attention at that time than debates over national standards garner today. Unlike current national standards discussions, however, the adoption of the comprehensive high school model in effect involved a rejection of the demands of business interests. By revisiting this debate we can renew our understanding of the original intent of the comprehensive high school model, that is, not only to serve students with different backgrounds, abilities, and aspirations, but also to unify them.

Social Efficiency and the Comprehensive School

It has been argued that despite the development of a unitary system, secondary education was nevertheless class-based and instrumental at predestining students into narrow economic roles. It has been argued that, in fact, such social and economic determinism was an express intent of the comprehensive school. This social efficiency/control interpretation of early 20th century secondary education has prevailed in historical scholarship and has been applied specifically to the Cardinal Principles report. I have challenged this interpretation elsewhere (Wraga, 1994a, 1994b), but would like to add a further point to the argument that I think sheds further light on the origins of the comprehensive school in the United States.

Examining the origins of curriculum as a field of systematic study, Kliebard (1968) remarked that "1918 was a vintage year in curriculum" (p. 71). This was the year in which Bobbitt's *The Curriculum*, Inglis' *Principles of Secondary Education*, Kilpatrick's "The Project Method," and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education's *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* were published. Kliebard continued, "Of the four works cited, however, Inglis' and Kilpatrick's must be regarded essentially as works of individual genius, while Bobbitt's and the Cardinal Principles report were distinctive products of their time and their social milieu" (p. 71). Kliebard maintained that the works of Bobbitt and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education were lucid manifestations of the contemporary commitment to social efficiency (p. 75). Although he characterized the Cardinal Principles report as "only a moderate statement of the social efficiency doctrine" (p. 77), Kliebard clearly associates it with Bobbitt and distinguishes it from the work of Inglis and Kilpatrick. By implication, Inglis' and Kilpatrick's work are substantively different from both the Cardinal Principles report and Bobbitt's work, and they do not manifest the prevailing social efficiency mind set. While several aspects of Kliebard's rendering of the field's origins warrant further consideration, the present discussion is concerned with his representation of the Cardinal Principles report as a manifestation of social efficiency, particularly as contrasted with Inglis and Kilpatrick. This interpretation is problematic for two reasons.

The first reason stems from the overlooked fact that both Kilpatrick and Inglis were members of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. This evidence can be dismissed as circumstantial if one embraces Krug's (1964) interpretation that credits Clarence Kingsley, who chaired the Commission, as the major, if not sole, author of the Cardinal Principles report. Of course, it could be that, due to extenuating circumstances, Commission members had little input to Kingsley's drafts, or that he ignored input and emphasized his own ideas. In addition to having been members of the Commission, however, Inglis and Kilpatrick served on a special revision committee that received Kingsley's final draft in February 1916 (Krug, 1964, p. 384). The extent of their involvement and input at this stage remains obscure in Krug's account. However, given the strength of their individual geniuses, the likelihood that they influenced the final document

is a least as good as the likelihood that they did not.

This suggestion is offered not only because of Inglis and Kilpatrick's presence and duties on the Commission, but also because an examination of their 1918 works--those that Kliebard distinguished from the Cardinal Principles report--reveals striking similarities to both the substance and language of the Cardinal Principles report. In fact, Inglis advances proposals that are virtually identical to those proffered by the Commission. Inglis' 741 page book can easily be read as an elaboration of the ideas and practices presented in the 32 page Cardinal Principles report.

Inglis (1918) set his discussion of the organization of secondary education in the context of the recent debate over "comprehensive versus special-type secondary schools" (p. 698). After examining in detail the advantages and disadvantages of "special-type" high schools, Inglis concluded, On the whole it appears: (a) that special-type junior high schools are unjustifiable; (b) that special-type four grade high schools or senior high schools are practicable in a very few large cities only; (c) that the comprehensive or composite or consolidated high school should be the standard type even in the largest cities. (p. 703)

Further, Inglis identified the high school as the best site for vocational education; when work place experiences are imperative, Inglis called for "cooperative part-time vocational work" closely supervised by educators, warning that, "Education must not be exploited by industry" (p. 711).

The *Cardinal Principles* report identified two functions of secondary education, the specializing and unifying functions, and proposed the famous seven aims of secondary education (not to be confused with the cardinal principles of secondary education, of which there were 19). In a different use of terms, Inglis proposed "three fundamental aims of secondary education": The Socio-Civic Aim; the Economic-Vocational Aim; and the Individualistic-Avocational Aim (p. 368). Inglis considered these three aims "interrelated and interdependent, since they represent but three different phases of life which concern each individual" (p. 374). He identified six "functions of secondary education," namely the adjustive or adaptive, the integrating, the differentiating, the propaedeutic, the selective, and the diagnostic and directive (p. 368).

For Inglis (1918), the integrating function involved achieving "the development of that amount of like-mindedness, of unity in thought, habits, ideals, and standards, requisite for social cohesion and social solidarity" (p. 377). The differentiating function "arises out of the necessity of taking advantage of the differences among individuals for the purpose of determining social efficiency" (p. 378). Significantly, Inglis emphasized that the "integrating function must at all times be conceived as correlated with the differentiating function of secondary education and the relation between the two functions must be considered as supplemental rather than conflicting" (p. 378). Lest the differentiating function appear baldly deterministic, Inglis maintained that the diagnostic and directive function would "permit the pupil to discover and test his own special aptitudes and capacities" (p. 383) so that "social economy and personal efficiency and happiness" (p. 382) would prevail. The similarity between Inglis' discussion of aims and functions of secondary education and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education's (1918) discussion of functions and aims, through which "the individual may society would find fulfillment each in the other" (p. 9), cannot be dismissed.

The resemblance becomes increasingly apparent when comparison is made between the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education and Inglis' proposals for organizing the high school curriculum. The Commission (1918) proposed that the curriculum be comprised of three "studies": curriculum "constants" that would "be taken by all or nearly all pupils"; curriculum "variables" that would"be determined for the most part by vocational needs, including, as they frequently do, preparation for advanced study in special fields"; and "free electives" that would be taken by "pupils in accordance with individual aptitudes or special interests" (p. 23).

Inglis (1918) proposed that the secondary school be organized into three "areas": "The area of constants includes that portion of the work of the senior high-school which is to engage the attention of all pupils of regular standing" (p. 689). He elaborated, "Such subjects may well be organized in the same way, cover the same field, and be taught in the same manner for all pupils in all curriculums" (p. 675). Continuing, he stated, "The area of curriculum restriction includes that portion of the work of the senior high school which provides for the specialized education appropriate to the various specialized curriculums" (p.689). Inglis also referred to this area as curriculum "variables" (p. 675). Finally, the "area of free electives includes that part of the school work which should be left to the unrestricted choice of the pupil whatever special curriculum may engage his particular attention" (p. 689). The Commission also called for flexibility in student programs so that pupils would be able not only to choose freely but also move freely among different curriculums (p. 25). Inglis called for similar flexibility, especially in the earlier grades of the high school (p. 679).

That the Commission's *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* and Inglis' *Principle of Secondary Education* should

bear a distinctive likeness to each other should of course be unsurprising considering Inglis' involvement in authoring both works. While this likeness would seem to warrant investigation into the exact nature and extent of Inglis' contribution to the Cardinal Principles report, this line of inquiry has not been pursued by historians. Simmons (1960) simply documents the similarities between the two and concludes, "Whether Inglis borrowed these ideas from the Commission, gave them to the Commission, or formulated them simultaneously with but independently of the Commission is inconsequential" (p. 339). Krug (1964), however, was unequivocal in his position that Clarence Kingsley was the principal, if not sole, author of the report. Again, Krug notes that Inglis, along with Kilpatrick and Cheesman Herrick, President of Girard College in Philadelphia, were members of a special revision committee. Krug's only mention of Inglis' role was fleeting: "After consulting with Inglis, Kingsley went ahead to do the revising himself, sending the new draft to the special committee and to the reviewing committee . . ." (p. 384). In these secondary accounts, then, Inglis' role remains obscure.

Inglis' colleagues at Harvard, however, were confident about his contributions to the report. At a memorial service conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education after Inglis' sudden death at the age of 45 in 1924, Dean Henry Wyman Holmes noted that Inglis "played a commanding part in the work of the Commission" (In Memoriam, 1925, p. 8). Colleague Frederick Edson Clerk claimed, "The work of the Commission was most thorough and comprehensive, and yet when it came to the Reviewing Committee, the searching scrutiny and unprejudiced analysis by Dr. Inglis and his associates frequently changed the original judgments and always improved them" (p. 33). In another memorial, Holmes noted that "Professor Inglis did especially important work, contributing much to the chief publication of the Commission" (p. 609, untitled document in general biographical folder, Harvard University Archives, HUG 300). While these tributary claims hardly count as solid evidence of Inglis' impact on the report, the matter seems to warrant further inquiry. Such an investigation, dependent of course on available records, could shed light on the extent to which the Cardinal Principles report is accurately depicted as a manifestation of narrow social efficiency.

Since Kilpatrick was obviously not writing about secondary education in particular, the parallels between his influential essay and the Cardinal Principles report may well be less clear and certainly less extensive. When the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1918) called, however, for "the assignment of projects and problems to groups of pupils for cooperative solution" (p. 14), it certainly endorsed a provision that bears a remarkable resemblance to Kilpatrick's (1918) famous project method.

Representation of the *Cardinal Principles* report as a manifestation of social efficiency s often based on language used in the report. James and Tyack (1983), for example, suggested that the language of the report was characterized by "a rhetoric of scientific management and social efficiency" (p. 403). Spring (1990), too, referred to the "strong nfluence of social-efficiency rhetoric" in the report (p. 205). Indeed, the *Cardinal Principles* report employs what appears to be social efficiency language; it is important, however, to attend to the way this language is used in the report. I have documented elsewhere (Wraga, 1994a, 1994b) that in the report the term efficiency was often tied to the word "intelligence" and frequently used interchangeably with the word "effectively." When viewed in the context of other provisions in the report, these usages cannot be construed as advocating a narrowly deterministic social efficiency of the kind Bobbitt or Snedden ostensibly championed. The term was used to denote not economy so much as competence. This point gains credence, I think, when one recognizes that the word "efficiency" was ubiquitous in educational writing at that time. Often overlooked are the nuances that result from particular contextual uses of the term.

In fact, both Kilpatrick and especially Inglis used the term in the 1918 works Kliebard disassociates from Bobbitt and the *Cardinal Principles* report. As Kilpatrick (1918) put it, "A an who habitually so regulates his life with reference to worthy social aims meets at once the demands of practical efficiency and of moral responsibility." He continued, "such a one represents the ideal of democratic citizenship" (p. 322). As is evident in some of the material quoted earlier, Inglis (1918) made quite liberal use of the term. For example, he defined the Socio-Civic Aim of secondary education as "preparation of individuals for efficient participation in those activities of society whose controlling purpose and primary object are desirable forms of social cooperation" (p. 368). Also, Efficient participation in those [life] activities depends on the employment of physical,mental, moral, and aesthetic traits which must be developed in individuals. Hence the attainment of the aims set is conditioned by the development of physical efficiency, mental fficiency, moral efficiency, and aesthetic efficiency of pupils. (pp. 374-75)

It seems that during this era the word "efficiency" was often used generically, say as one might use the word "restructuring" today, and to denote not economy necessarily, but also/alternately effectiveness and competence. Further, when educational efficiency was tied to the emerging conception of secondary education as preparation for life (versus college), this usage signaled not so much an endorsement of modern business values, but the rejection of traditional, formalistic educational practices. While this contention certainly would benefit from

further documentation, I would like to suggest that the authors of the *Cardinal Principles* report, like Inglis and Kilpatrick, used the term in such a fashion.

Dissemination of the Comprehensive Model

Even if it can be demonstrated that the intent and purpose of the comprehensive high school model, according to its staunchest advocates (such as Dewey and Inglis) was simultaneously to unify the diverse elements of a polyglot democratic society and to cater to individual, specialized needs and interests, the important question is whether the model can and does achieve this end. To what extent were the proposals of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education implemented in American schools? The work of George Counts at the University of Chicago and of Walter S. Monroe and M.E. Herriott at the University of Illinois during the 1920s sheds further light on this issue.

George Counts and the Comprehensive High School

"Through the establishment of the public high school as an upward extension of elementary education, America transformed the dual educational system of the Old World into a single system. This achievement constitutes a major contribution to the evolution of educational institutions and to the growth of civilization." Thus wrote George Counts in the opening sentences of his 1926 study of *The Senior High School Curriculum* (p. 1). "In no other social institution has the genius of the American people more fully expressed itself," Counts (1926) continued. "In the public high school America has given concrete expressionto the principle of the equalization of opportunity, has refused to make education an instrument for the stratification of social classes, has opposed the forces of education to the inheritance of special privilege, and has sought to open to all classes the doors of social leadership" (p. 1).

During the 1920s Counts was a keen observer of secondary schools in the United States. In addition to his study of The Social Composition of Boards of Education, begun in 1920 and published in 1927, Counts also published his analysis of *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* in 1922 and his examination of The Senior High School Curriculum in 1926. In these works, as well as in *The American Road to Culture* (1930), Counts was concerned with the extent to which secondary education practice was consistent with the educational ideals that emerged during the first two decades of the century. For Counts, these ideals were clearly manifested in the comprehensive high school.

In *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education*, Counts (1922) observed that, "The conception of secondary education as education for the selected few, whether by birth or by talent, appears to be giving ground before the assaults of political democracy and the demands of a society of increasing complexity and wealth" (p. 3). After documenting the expansion of secondary school enrollments between 1870 and 1918, Counts noted, "Truly the American public high school occupies a unique place among educational institutions" (p. 2). Writing a few years later in *The Senior High School Curriculum*, Counts (1926) observed,

> In the past secondary education has been frankly selective. Its opportunities have been extended to only a small percentage of the population of high-school age. To the needs of children of the favored classes and those of superior intellectual gifts the secondary school has been dedicated; to all others its doors have been closed. . . . Whether the American people are aware of it or not, the very meaning of secondary education s rapidly and radically changing. (p. 1)

Counts recognized that the expansion of high school enrollments was accompanied by an expansion of curricular offerings. Observing that the appearance of new subjects presented the issue of whether they should be welcomed into the "traditional academic school" or introduced through "new types of schools," Counts (1926) was referring to the dual versus unitary system debate. He summarized, "Fifteen years ago the controversy over this question was waged with considerable vigor, and victory seemed to lie with those who advocated the comprehensive school. Subsequently, interest in a system of differentiated schools apparently declined, and there has been a strong movement in favor of a single type of secondary school." He acknowledged, however, that, "No one can say, . . ., that this issue has been finally settled" (p. 9). Counts (1926) observed that in American cities it was the tendency for "the differentiated school [to] gradually assume a comprehensive aspect" (p. 10) so that the visitor to city schools "gains the impression that the comprehensive school is the dominant type of secondary institution in the United States" (p. 10). Counts summarized these developments in *The American Road to Culture (*1930), as well. Significant passages from his discussion are quoted here at length to reveal their bearing not only on our examination of Counts' disposition toward the comprehensive school, but also on the social efficiency interpretation of the comprehensive model. Some argued in the name of efficiency that the different interests should be housed in different buildings and be provided with different managements; others argued in the name of democracy that all of these interests should be brought together in one institution.

According to the first proposal the secondary school system of a large city would include a series of specialized schools, while

according to the second it would consist of but a single type of comprehensive school organized in sufficient numbers to meet the demand for adolescent education. Although both plans have found expression in America, the second is more popular and seems to have triumphed. (pp. 84-85)

In this passage it is clear that Counts did not associate social efficiency with the comprehensive high school or vice versa; rather, he saw the comprehensive high school as a manifestation of democratic ideals. Expanding on "the argument that it [the comprehensive school] represents the more democratic solution to the problem," Counts continued,

> According to this argument, which throws a clear light on the American conception of democracy, the organization of separate institutions into the teaching of the industrial arts, the commercial branches, and the older academic subjects would divide the adolescent population into distinct groups and thus tend to recognize and accentuate the differences which already exist in adult society. On the other hand, the establishment of the comprehensive high school would bring all children together, regardless of their occupational futures, and thus prolong into the period of adolescence the common associations provided by the public elementary school. (pp. 85-86)

But while Counts was favorably disposed toward the ideal of the comprehensive high school and its implications for an industrial democracy, he was less sanguine and rather realistic about the implementation of that ideal in practice.

In his study of The Social Composition of Boards of Education begun in 1920, for example, Counts (1927) found that despite the egalitarian ideals undergirding compulsory public education, members of boards of education were, "for the most part, . . . drawn from the more favored economic and social classes" (p. 82). He put it at length,

> The persons who are chosen for membership on the more powerful boards of education are those who have attended our secondary schools and colleges and occupy the privileged positions in society. The occupations which they most frequently represent are those of the merchant, the lawyer, the banker, the manufacturer, and the physician. From the ranks of the less favored classes few members are chosen. (p. 83)

In considering the ramifications of this finding, Counts rejected the notion that those citizens who succeed by society's standards are those most fit to direct the control of public schooling. He pointed to the growing concern on the part of labor groups that public schools were increasingly under the control of management interests. Noting their contribution to "the Nineteenth-Century struggle for free schools," Counts observed, They [the laboring classes] are beginning to fear that the agency through which they aspired to freedom may become a weapon turned against them or an instrument whereby some ruling caste may seek to hold them in bondage. This lack of confidence in the public school on the ground that it is under the control of the great capitalistic and employing interests is further revealed by the utterances of various leaders of organized labor. (p. 86)

Then he considered the more general issue of whether those elected to such offices would necessarily [2] work not in their own interest, but in the interest of the public welfare.

> The argument may be advanced that these board members, though drawn from a restricted class, will, because of the superior educational opportunities which they have enjoyed, rise above a narrow loyalty to their group and formulate educational policies in terms of the common interest. We all wish that this were so, but there is little evidence from the human past to support it. The rare individual will strive earnestly to have regard for the best interests of all classes, but no one can transcend the limits set by his own experience. The best of us are warped and biased by the very process of living. (p. 90)

The temptation on the part of any controlling element in society to employ such an instrument [the high school] to promote its own special point of view is certain to be extraordinarily seductive. Is any class able to withstand it? A major task which confronts us, therefore, is that of devising some means of so controlling the school that it may not become the subservient tool of some powerful interest group in the community. (p. 91)

Given that "our boards of education are composed of business men" (p. 94), Counts came to the conclusion that, "There is grave danger that the curriculum, methods of instruction, administrative organization, and criteria of successful achievement in the school will be derived from the procedures, needs, and ideals, of commerce and industry" (p. 94). (Years later, his student, Raymond Callahan, documented this phenomenon.) As a solution to this problem, Counts endorsed proposals like those offered by the American Federation of Teachers that the membership of every school board be truly representative the wider community, including members from education, business, agriculture, and labor (pp. 96-97).

Acknowledging the astronomical growth of secondary school enrollments between 1870 and 1920 as a manifestation of the

egalitarian ideal, Counts (1922) opened *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* with the observation that, "Truly the American public high school occupies a unique place among educational institutions" (p. 2). In this study Counts sought to measure secondary school practice against the ideal of universal secondary education. He did this by gathering data from public high schools in four cities relatively representative of U.S. urban centers and from two private schools for purposes of comparison.

Summarizing his data, Counts (1922) observed that, "High-school students, even today and in spite of the amazing growth of the high-school enrollment since 1880, are a highly selective group" (p. 141). Counts attributed this selectivity to three factors: (1) the relation of parental occupation and enrollment, that is, the influence of family circumstances and expectations on student attendance; (2) the fact that drop-outs were largely from "laboring classes and lower grades of labor," with the result that, as Counts put it, "by the time the Senior year of the high school is reached, the student body exhibits a distinctly class character" (p. 142); and (3) choice of curricula--students from laboring classes that remain in school tend to "patronize the more narrow and practical curricula" while high SES students enroll in college prep classes. Counts also examined this phenomena with respect to immigrants and African-Americans and found that, although there were significant exceptions within these groups, generally they were less represented in the later years of high school than children "of native parentage." He also found that all groups sent a larger proportion of girls than boys to school, though girls' choice of curricula were more constrained by class expectations, and that lastborn children had greater likelihood of completing high school than firstborns, with the burden of financial support of the family most often falling on the latter.

Citing Dewey's well-known dictum about the educational ideal that "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children," Counts (1922) concluded that "it is clear that we are very far from the realization of this ideal in our own country" with respect to secondary education (p. 149). He continued, "We are probably as near to it, if not somewhat nearer, than are the people of any other nation; and yet the facts do not set especially well with our professions of equality of opportunity" (p. 149).

Counts (1922) closed his study with a consideration of the meaning of universal secondary education suggesting, among other things, that "this ideal of equality of educational opportunity does not mean sameness of opportunity" (p. 149) and that "the selective principle, resulting in elimination, must appear at some point in our educational system" (p. 150). He suggested that the question that remained to be settled, however, was the point at which and the conditions under which the selective principle should go into effect. Admitting that this issue was beyond the scope of his study, Counts suggested only that, should the commitment to compulsory secondary education endure, it would require that "Pedagogic [illegible]al traditions and administrative conveniences will have to adopt themselves to the conditions of life" (p. 155). Counts endorsed compulsory education for "all children of the community with adequate provision for individual differences in ability, aptitude, and interest" (pp. 155-56) through the period of secondary education. Advanced educational opportunities beyond secondary school should be based not upon class privilege, but upon "ability, aptitude, and interest." Counts concluded, "There is no other course that leads to democracy, puts the high school at the service of every class without distinction, and at the same time renders the largest service to the entire community" (p. 156).

In his study of The Senior High School Curriculum, Counts (1926) sought to examine the impact of the new conception of secondary education (i.e, as preparation broadly for life rather than narrowly for college) on what he took to be the most progressive city high schools around the country. He found clearly that curricular offerings had expanded significantly since the turn of the century. "In place of a narrow, academic program, including but twenty-five or thirty units of work, the progressive community today offers a program in its public high schools which represents widely divergent needs and includes from fifty to more than one hundred units of subject matter" (p. 9). This finding is obviously consistent with expansion documented in other contemporary surveys of practice, discussed below. Counts noted that "the tendency to add to the program of studies is much stronger than the tendency to subtract from the present program" (p. 122). The result was the coexistence of "new" curricula and courses and traditional subjects.

Counts (1926) found, however, that while the expansion of offerings represented an effort to serve various levels of students ability, this effect was achieved only "indirectly." Rather, "New subjects have been added and new curriculums organized primarily for the purpose of appealing to the different interests, and preparing for the different futures, of children" (p. 26). This was problematic for Counts because students wound up in particular courses or curriculums not due to ability, but due to factors heavily influenced by socioeconomic status, as he had demonstrated earlier.

Counts (1926) observed that, although many new courses and curriculums had been introduced to the secondary school in the name of the changing conception of secondary education, "the college prep tradition . . . remains a powerful factor in

secondary education" (p. 11). "Since this tradition continues to carry great social prestige," he continued, "it dominates the comprehensive school" (p. 11). The result was the generation of "attitudes of social inferiority in those who do not pursue the favored curriculums" (p. 11). Thus, "wise choice of courses on the part of pupils is practically impossible," always contaminated by "the factor of social prestige" (p. 11; see also p. 130).

Counts (1926) attributed this problem to a tendency to change the curriculum on a "traditional, rather than a scientific, basis" (p. 131). The weight of tradition against the "wise choice of courses" would be swayed, Counts suggested, when "changes in the curriculum will be regarded increasingly as a professional function and will be initiated and consummated by methods which are now employed in the realm of mechanical invention" (p. 131). Counts also found many teachers generally unclear about the new direction secondary education was headed in, and at worst virtually unaware of and at best ambivalent about their level of commitment to the aims proposed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education.

In summary then, while Counts recognized the limitations of and obstacles to implementation of the comprehensive high school, he placed the model squarely in the common school tradition and viewed it as the secondary school organization most consistent with democratic ideals.

Expansion of Specialized Offerings

The expansion of high school offerings that accompanied the rise of the comprehensive high school is well documented and accurately tied to the concomitant expansion of enrollments, as Counts suggested. Shortly before his death, Inglis (1923) put the matter this way:

> As the curriculum was expanded, larger proportions of the population were enrolled and pupils of different types were attracted. Reciprocally, as pupils were enrolled in larger numbers and as the secondary school attracted pupils of different types, the curriculum expanded to meet their needs. (p. 2)

Simmons (1960) examined a half dozen studies conducted during the 1920s and 1930s that attempted to determine the impact of the *Cardinal Principles* report on secondary schools. Together these studies suggest that, in addition to an increasing though incomplete commitment to education for life as well as for college and increasing use of the famous seven aims, course offerings clearly expanded after 1918 (Wraga, 1994a, pp. 32-33). Data gathered in U.S. Office of Education surveys also documented unprecedented increase in the number and variety of courses offered in American high schools, pointing in particular to increase in vocational offerings (Jessen, 1938). The Lynds (1929, 1935) reported similar expansion of offerings in their classic studies of Middletown.

Two additional studies conducted during the 1920s corroborate these findings. Monroe and Herriott (1928) aimed to "identify and interpret trends in the development of the secondary-school curriculum" since 1893 (p. iii). More a synthesis of literature pertaining to secondary curriculum than an accounting of offerings and enrollments, Monroe and Herriott's study mainly documented changes in ways of thinking about the high school curriculum. Among the discernible changes they found were the following: (1) a shift from perceiving the high school as serving the college bound elite to serving all pupils; (2) a shift in the conception of curriculum from a body of specialized knowledge to be communicated to the student to the activities students should experience to meet particular learning objectives; (3) a marked change from virtually ignoring individual differences among pupils to aggressively accommodating them. Monroe and Herriott (1928) described the changes in the organization of secondary curriculum as follows:

> A few subjects disappeared from the secondary-school curriculum or have become of little importance. On the other hand, many subjects have been added, so that the number of subject offerings has been greatly increased, perhaps more than doubled. These increases have occurred in the main in the commercial subjects and the practical and fine arts, in which the tendency is toward differentiation and multiplication of subjects. In the "older" fields of mathematics, science, English, and the social studies, there is a tendency toward unification and a reduction in the number of subjects. (p. 78)

In short, Monroe and Herriott characterized the changes in the idea and practice of secondary curriculum as an increasing, though still incomplete, departure from the conception of secondary education advanced by the Committee of Ten to the ascendance of the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* advanced by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that the expansion of offerings documented by Monroe and Herriott, Counts, and others had been evident for more than a decade prior to the publication of the *Cardinal Principles* report, and in many ways continued a trend begun with the academies in the early nineteenth century. Stout's (1922) study of curriculum in the North Central States between 1860 and 1918 is indicative of

this fact. Stout reported that the major changes in secondary education that he observed took place "since 1900 and more particularly since 1910" (p. 257). These changes included: (1) increased scope of the curriculum brought about by an increase in vocational courses and the "reorganization" of secondary education into a pattern of three years in junior high school and three in senior high school; (2) greater emphasis on "fitting for life" than on "fitting for college"; and (3) an increase in the range of subjects offered (p. 257).

The emergence of the comprehensive high school, then, can be regarded both as an extension of and a catalyst for the trend of expansion of offerings and enrollments in American schools.

Conclusion

The attempt here has been to document further key aspects of the development and early dissemination of the comprehensive high school model in the United States, namely, the debate over a dual versus unified system of secondary education, the social efficiency interpretation of the comprehensive model, George Counts and the comprehensive high school, and dissemination of the model as documented in surveys of offerings and enrollments. It is apparent that neither was the creation of the comprehensive high school model spontaneous nor its implementation complete. The various surveys of offerings and enrollments point not only to the inclusive nature of the comprehensive high school, but also to a preoccupation with providing differentiated, specialized opportunities at the neglect of common, unifying experiences beyond the important first step of assembling students under a single roof. While the unifying function was prominently featured by advocates of the comprehensive model during the dual versus unitary system debate, and despite advocacy of the unifying function by subsequent advocates such as Counts and later the Educational Policies Commission, the John Dewey Society, and James Bryant Conant, in practice the unifying function has been virtually ignored. Implementation of the comprehensive high school model as it was developed early in this century by progressive educators in the United States remains incomplete.

Notes

1. In addition to the examples discussed here, see Filene (1907) and Fosdick (1907).

2. For legislation pertaining to industrial education, see Simpkins (1915) and "Legislation for State Systems of Education," 1915. The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, of course, though providing for area vocational schools, in effect settled the issue in favor of the comprehensive high school.

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