



The United States is a world power with a poor educational system — what a paradox! — and bickering over education reform may be a permanent feature of American society. In a further paradox, much of the problem lies outside the schools themselves but rests in the chaotic amalgam of competing bureaucrats, boards, associations, agencies and unions that make up the education “system,” the broad social environment, and political divides.

In the past fifty years, despite all the wrangling between the two main political parties, the nation has been unable to develop a successful education strategy. Even among politicians there is a mindboggling lack of cohesion and consensus on public education. Although representatives of both parties advocate a good education for children, Democrats insist on increasing federal involvement in education accompanied with lavish federal funding while Republicans oppose the intensive involvement.

From elementary school to the university level, *Improving Education in the US* navigates readers through the confusing and often contradictory information about the problems facing education. The book shows the deficiency of the existing education system and compares it to more efficient, effective systems. It explains the basics of the organizational structure of education, the role of the federal government, state governments, and local governments in running school systems and how they are all different. The author considers various aspects of public education systems from elementary school through university, the genesis of public schools in the United States, issues that still need to be addressed, trends in education and reform and analyses of what is working or not working.

This book has as its main goal to explain the current American education system and why it is a failure despite ongoing efforts at reform. The author shows that the existing approaches to improve education are based on the same foolish idea that as long as government spending on education is great enough, improvement will follow. The author shows that multiple research attempts to improve the functioning of the existing education system were unable to bring any tangible results because they dealt with separate, purely educational problems, rather than the global one, and were conducted by experts in education rather than experts in system analysis, operation research and optimal theory who are able to approach complex problems using the appropriate tools. He uses his knowledge in these areas to explain what should be done for progress in the US education system to become reality.

Bombarded by the unrealistic promises of politicians, parents want to believe them because the promises coincide with their desire to give their children a better education. But such promises have

little chance for success, especially when any real analysis must inevitably show some portion of the huge educational bureaucracy and various educational organizations around the public school system to be redundant or dysfunctional, and that would cost someone's jobs and put them out of business. Those responsible for doing the analysis have no incentive to do it well. Without any doubt, education is a national problem. Many or most Americans feel it is the government's obligation to resolve it, but it cannot be resolved without the active cooperation of all parties to the project.

Everyone who cares about America's future must be armed with information related to the US public system of education. Is it not paradoxical that the richest and most advanced country in the world has an unsatisfactory system of public education that threatens the country's future prosperity? It is a dangerous sign of a possible future decline. The author hopes that this book will help readers to understand some of the difficulties in rebuilding the existing public education system.

Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Chapter 1. The Wealth of a Nation	5
The Gold Standard	6
The Race to Mediocrity	7
The Teacher Becomes the Student	8
The Department of Education — Myth or Reality?	9
First Response	10
A Sinking Ship	11
Chapter 2. The Founding Fathers and the History of Public Education	13
In the Beginning	13
A Missed Opportunity	18
The Winds of Change	20
Goals in Education	20
Chapter 3. Destiny's Child	25
America's Achievements	25
Disparities Between Goals and Achievements	27
Educational Statistics	29
Why Are Americans Behind other Leading Industrial Countries in Education?	34
Chapter 4. How the US Education System Works	39
Department of Education	39
Boards of Education	41

Bureaucracy in Action	44
Education and Its Environment	46
Chapter 5. Education and Politics	53
A History of Government Initiatives	53
A Call to Arms	58
Politics and Educational Progress	66
Trade Unions and Educational Progress	71
Democrats and Republicans on Education	74
Chapter 6. I Learn Therefore I Am	79
Testing and Grading Systems	80
The Truth of the Test	83
Admission Standards	86
Chapter 7. Climbing To the Top	89
Curricula and Education Standards	90
Necessity of Textbook Examination	95
Chapter 8. Teach the Teacher	101
Teachers' Qualification	102
Maintaining the Status Quo	106
Bureaucracy in Classrooms	107
Chapter 9. A Parent's Job is Never Done	115
The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree	116
Parents' Voices Must Be Heard	118
Chapter 10. Public Versus Private	121
Chapter 11. Charting the Way for Charter Schools	131
Chapter 12. System Approach to Educational Problems	139
Education and National Goals	141
Achieving Goals	149
Trust But Verify	159
Deficiency of the Existing Educational Structure	167
Chapter 13. Improving the System of Higher Education	173
Accreditation and Quality of Education	173

Reasons for the Increasing Cost of Education	177
Should Tenure Be Abolished?	183
The Ivy Universities — Dreams and Reality	186
Chapter 14. Money Makes the World Go Around	201
Appendix 1. Post-World War II American Nobel Prize Laureates	217
Appendix 2. A Hypothetical Curriculum for Basic Subjects	225
Afterword	249
Index	251