

School Choice and School Governance

Author's Previously Published Books

The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965). Reprinted by Kennicat Press, 1972.

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From Crisis to Crisis: American College Government 1636–1819 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

Research and Teaching: Personal Reflections and The University in the United States: Tradition and Reform (Mitaka, Tokyo: International Christian University Faculty Development Series No. 1; 1996).

The Once and Future School: Three Hundred and Fifty Years of American Secondary Education (New York, London: Routledge, 1996).

Requiem for a German Past: A Boyhood among the Nazis (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

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GOVERNANCE

A HISTORICAL
STUDY OF THE UNITED STATES
AND GERMANY

JURGEN HERBST

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In the United States school choice is today a subject of debate. It began to make headlines during the 1950s as it was viewed by many parents and legislators as one answer to what was seen as the crisis of public schooling: A deterioration of facilities and of student discipline in inner city schools, a perceived lessening of academic standards nationwide, and a simultaneous demand that public schools become the engines of national progress in all areas of economic, scientific, and cultural life. In several Southern states the 1954 desegregation decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* strengthened agitation for parental choice as a means of escaping integrated public schools. When the cold war with the Soviet Union heated up and Congress passed the National Defense Education Act in 1958 both academic proponents of strengthened science education in the schools and free-wheeling lay pedagogical reformers endorsed school choice proposals of various kinds. By the 1960s free market advocates as well as liberal scholars introduced the idea of vouchers as favored means for financing school choice programs. School choice had become a front-page subject.

In the reunified Germany of the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century, school choice had assumed two different meanings. As the country's educational system, administered in the *Länder* of the Federal Republic, had returned to its traditional dual system of academic and vocational education and its three-pronged arrangement of elementary, middle, and higher schools, school choice known as *Schulwahl* referred to the selection of an advanced school for those children who, at age ten, were thought capable of a secondary education. This was a practice that had come into use during the second half of the nineteenth century. Today, however, the meaning of the term *Schulwahl* also includes parental participation

in a great variety of choices made concerning the education of their children. These choices may pertain to the level of schooling but can also affect any other educational issue that in the past had been customarily left to the authorities of Germany's state-directed and controlled public school system.

In this book I investigate the antecedents of today's school choice policies in the United States and Germany. I do not attempt here to offer a full-fledged comparative history, but think of my presentation as an exercise in contrasting history—a history that gives background and contrast to its main subject (American school choice) by setting it before or against a related, though not identical, subject (German *Schulwahl*). In our age of worldwide interrelatedness one cannot present adequately the history of one country's school choice if one makes that subject the single item of observation. When one does that, one can view and understand it only through its own genesis and development in the context of its native environment. When, however, one sees it against the background of a similar item in a different setting, a fuller, more encompassing perspective becomes possible. Thus my focus in this book has remained throughout on the United States with Prussia and Germany serving as background for the American story.

I should also alert my readers to my realization that the subject of school choice is inextricably intertwined with the subject of school governance. The one cannot be discussed without the other, and both together present a general history of public education policy. As in this book I look at the interactions of parents with school authorities and classroom teachers, I also review the public debates over legislative and judicial issues concerning the public schools.

I address this book primarily to a readership of citizens who, like I myself, seek to gain a better understanding of public events. My participation as a lecturer in the Lifelong Learning Program of Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, has immensely increased my appreciation of such general town-gown audiences of interested lay persons, teachers, school administrators, state legislators, businessmen, and businesswomen, professionals of many kind, college faculty members and college students. Their reactions and questions have been an inspiration. Writing this book, I have had them in mind. But college instructors, too, will find the book a helpful text

for both graduate and undergraduate classes in educational history and policy studies.

Earlier publications drawing on some of the material used in the preparation of this book include my "Schools Between State and Civil Society in Germany and the United States—An Historical Perspective," which appeared in Heinz-Dieter Meyer and William Lowe Boyd, eds., *Education between State, Markets, and Civil Society: Comparative Perspectives* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), and my "Nineteenth Century Schools Between Community and State: The Cases of Prussia and the United States," in the *History of Education Quarterly*, 42 (Fall 2002): 317–341.

It is now my pleasant duty to acknowledge the support I received during the many months I spent gathering material for this study and putting my analyses and conclusions into final form. My thanks go to the Spencer Foundation whose generous financial support enabled me to carry out research in German archives. I am especially indebted to Professor Manfred Heinemann of the University of Hannover whose hospitality at his Zentrum für Zeitgeschichte von Bildung und Wissenschaft and whose sage advice proved to be of inestimable value. I also gladly acknowledge the assistance I received at the Wissenschaftszentrum in Bonn, from Dr. Renate Martini at the Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung in Frankfurt/Main, and from Professor Frank-Rüdiger Jach in Hannover. Advice, encouragement, and support also have come from Professor William J. Reese of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Professor Gary McCulloch of the University of London's Institute of Education. As much as I have relied on their advice and counsel, I cannot claim that they necessarily agree with the views and opinions I express in these pages. I alone am responsible for them and for any errors of fact and interpretation found in this book. My thanks also go to Phyllis Kroupa and her staff at the Interlibrary Loan Department of the Reed Library at Fort Lewis College. Without their help I would never have been able to carry this study to a conclusion. And as always there has been Sue, my life's love, who listened and counseled as only she can do.

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