

Summary



EDUCATION IN AMERICA To have a successful country, you must have an educated citizenry. Few things are more important than education. With it people can leave behind their class or status and leapfrog over others. They are more productive and more informed. Real education is found in schools, and America has many of these. But it is important to understand where these schools came from and where they are going. These three articles provide a great deal of insight into this question. Each of these authors presents facts and opinions about the American education system and tries to persuade us of their views. In Rudolph's article, the history of American universities is presented. From the earliest days, the struggle of those who sought a better way for American students is shared with the reader. Some men begged books to start new schools, some man fought danger in the wilderness to found a new college that would present education to the people. The early days were a real challenge. As America grew, so did its universities. Many schools were inspired by a religious awakening that occurred in America's early days. Each denomination had its own school and many of these survive to this day. At their best, Rudolph argues, these schools represented American democracy and helped the idea of America flourish. Kerr's article presents a more contemporary view of universities and shows how they are adapting to try to survive in today's changing marketplace. Universities play a somewhat different role than they did in the period discussed by Rudolph. Now they are intended more to train people for employment and conduct important research that can save lives and change the way we think about our place in the world. But funding is scarce.

Research universities are the fountainhead of research and development and yet they lack the federal funds to continue to produce at an effective level.

Kerr wonders about the future of such universities. He sees them as vital but threatened by a number of uncertainties. Privatization is one concern. If companies fund too much public research the results may be skewed. It is better, in Kerr's opinion, to have taxpayers fund it. Still, in the end, Kerr thinks the research university is indispensable. The final article is about magnet schools. These are specialist educational places that allow students to focus on certain disciplines. The development of these kinds of schools over the last few decades shows that American thinking on these kinds of questions continues to develop and evolve. One of the goals of these kinds of schools is to have open enrolment which allows more desegregation and racial mixing. America has a long and difficult history regarding education and race, the authors explain, and this may be one way of tackling this complex issue. Evaluations of a number of schools have shown that magnet schools can achieve these goals. Education is the central theme of all three of these articles. All three show that America is better with a strong education system. They look to the past and the future in order to see what works and what makes America a stronger, more united country.