The Pedagogical Seminary

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/vzps20>

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Supt. Thomas M. Balliet

Published online: 28 Aug 2012.

To cite this article: Supt. Thomas M. Balliet (1901) A Few Lessons to be Learned from European Schools, The Pedagogical Seminary, 8:1, 59-64, DOI: [10.1080/08919402.1901.10533020](https://doi.org/10.1080/08919402.1901.10533020)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08919402.1901.10533020>

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A FEW LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM EUROPEAN SCHOOLS.

By SUPT. THOMAS M. BALLIET.

So far as elementary education is concerned European countries have, to say the least, as much to learn from us as we from them. The spirit of our best primary schools, the sympathetic relation between teacher and pupils, and the spontaneity of both are seldom found in similar schools in Europe. This is partly due to the fact that in America the teachers in these schools are women, partly to the fact that there is less direction and prescription by central authority, and, consequently, more freedom allowed teachers, and partly to the fact that we have studied children more scientifically and more sympathetically than any other nation. This last fact is coming to be recognized abroad, and European educationists are looking to this country both for inspiration and for light on the general subject of child psychology.

Whilst the best American primary schools are somewhat better than the best primary schools abroad, the same cannot be said either of our grammar schools or of our high schools. The teaching in the upper classes of European elementary schools is in many respects considerably more effective than that in our higher grammar grades. The teachers are more scholarly and have mastered far better than American teachers the matter to be taught. This is especially true of such subjects as geography and history. They know better how to prepare the subject matter for class instruction, how to distinguish between the relative importance of various parts, and how to present them in true perspective to their classes. We might say that the American teacher excels in so far as a knowledge of children conditions effective teaching, the foreign teacher excels in so far as a knowledge of subject matter and the pedagogical principles growing out of it determine the character of instruction. The American grammar school is relatively not so efficient as the American primary school. This difference between foreign elementary schools and our own may, no doubt, be partly traced to the normal schools. Foreign normal schools, especially those of Germany, train their teachers better for the work of the higher grades of the elementary schools than for that of the grades corresponding to our primary schools, whilst

American normal schools do the reverse. Few of our normal schools train teachers well for grammar school work.

There is far more oral teaching in the best foreign schools than in our own, and far less of book study. A lesson is seldom assigned to be studied until it has been taught. There are virtually no "study periods" during the school session, and yet in the elementary schools there is no more home study required of children than is required in our own. If the American teacher should master the subject matter as the foreign teacher does, and then present it with the living voice instead of requiring children to learn it from books, the work of our grammar schools would gain materially in effectiveness. The time is not far distant when the higher classes in our grammar schools will be taught by college graduates who have also received professional training, either in college or some superior normal school.

Such subjects as singing and drawing are taught far better in good American schools than in European schools.

The chief defect of the foreign elementary school is the fact that it does not connect directly with any higher school which prepares for the polytechnic school and the university. There is, however, a system of "continuation schools," corresponding roughly in aim to our evening schools, to which graduates of the elementary schools can go, and which in some sections of Europe they are compelled by law to attend. In these schools the elementary mathematics, French, English, drawing and drafting are commonly taught. In addition to these there are many trade schools. Berlin had in all twenty-eight of these continuation and trade schools in 1899, with an attendance of 25,000 students. The teaching in these schools is fully as efficient as that in our best American high schools, and some of it is better. There is no system of evening schools in our own country which can bear comparison with these schools. It need not be added that teachers in these schools are appointed on merit, and that the same qualifications are demanded of them as are required of day school teachers.

Technical and commercial education is developed in all the countries in Central Europe far more than in our own. Their higher technical schools are of a higher grade than ours, and they have between them and the trade schools various schools, like those at Chemnitz and Prague, whose aim is to prepare students for positions as foremen in shops, superintendents of manufacturing establishments, and for similar positions. We have no schools exactly of this type. What we need is elementary technical schools and trade schools at public expense.

Commercial schools are rapidly developing in like manner abroad. These are not only such as are of university rank, like

those of Antwerp, Leipzig, Vienna, and Paris, but also others like the one at Gera or Nuremberg, which correspond in rank somewhat to our high schools. A few of our universities have already organized courses in commerce and finance, and others will soon follow. There remains the problem of providing a commercial school of the rank of our secondary schools.

These needs can be provided only by broadening our secondary education. The division of high schools into "English" and "Latin" is virtually a thing of the past. There will be at least three types of high schools in the future, and they are indeed now in process of development: the literary high school, the manual training high school, which is rapidly becoming a technical school, and the commercial high school.

Teaching in foreign countries is recognized, not in name only but in fact, as a profession. This is possible on four conditions. First every teacher must have received professional training. Secondly, there is a rigid State examination to bar out the unfit. Thirdly, there is permanency of tenure after a definite period of trial teaching; and fourthly, there is a pension which makes teaching attractive enough to draft into the service superior ability, and also makes it possible to relieve the schools of superannuated teachers. In order to elevate teaching to the dignity of a profession in this country, it is essential that these steps be taken in the order here stated, and not in the reverse order; and yet the latter is precisely the one proposed in some quarters. Nothing could be so injurious to the interest of education in our country as to provide permanency of tenure and a system of pensions, and still allow teachers to be appointed without thorough professional training through political influence and personal favoritism.

It is, however, from the secondary schools of Europe that we have most to learn. Their organization is quite similar in all countries of continental Europe. The course is generally seven, eight or nine years in the case of those which fit for the universities and the higher polytechnic and commercial schools, and six years in those of lower grade. Pupils enter at the age of nine, ten or eleven, and the average age of graduation is eighteen or nineteen. There is an entire absence of any institution corresponding to the American college. These secondary schools cover the years of the upper five classes or grades of our grammar schools, the four classes of our high schools, and the first two classes of our best colleges. They accomplish in nine years what it takes us eleven or twelve to accomplish. This is made possible in three ways. First, by separating at the age of nine, ten or eleven the pupils who are to fit for the higher institutions of learning from those who are to enter practical life at the end of the elementary school course. Secondly,

some foreign language, either ancient or modern, is begun at once on entering, and algebra and geometry are introduced several years earlier than is the case in our own schools. The "common branches" are taught somewhat less extensively than in the elementary schools. Thirdly, much more extensive and thorough preparation is required of the teachers in these schools than we require of teachers in our high schools. To become a teacher in one of these secondary schools, the applicant must have had what is equivalent to a college education, followed by at least three years of university study, then he must have devoted (in Prussia) a year to the study of pedagogics, and another year to trial teaching. After all this preparation he can obtain only a license to teach those subjects to which he devoted special study at the university, and in which he has passed rigid examinations. It is teachers with this kind of preparation into whose hands are placed little boys of nine, ten or eleven years of age at once on entering the secondary school.

An effort has been made in this country to shorten the time required to fit students for the university and the professional schools by introducing high school studies into our grammar schools, by "enriching" the grammar school course. The result has been on the whole disappointing. Foreign nations have solved the problem, and we must sooner or later adopt their solution. It consists, as pointed out, in the earlier separation of pupils who are to fit for higher institutions of learning from those who expect to enter practical life on leaving the grammar schools, and in demanding for our secondary schools teachers who have had not only a college education, but who have had university training and who have made some study of the science of education besides. There ought to be grammar schools in every city for children who are later to fit for college, in which a four years' course could be arranged to prepare for the high school. In large grammar schools double courses can be arranged, as is done in Cambridge, Mass.; in small schools this is not practicable. Under certain conditions the higher grammar grades may, with advantage, be incorporated into the high school, but this is not generally the most satisfactory solution.

It need not follow from this that our school system become undemocratic. There can be courses kept in our secondary schools which will directly connect with the ordinary grammar schools, and in this way the door to the higher institutions be kept open to all.

The question of shortening the time required to prepare for the professional school will probably find a further solution in a readjustment of the work now done by the college. By re-

quiring of high school teachers such training as has been suggested, and by adding two more years to the present high school course, our best high schools could fit for the university and the professional school fully as thoroughly as the colleges did twenty-five years ago. The course would be a little less extensive, but the quality of the teaching would be better. This would be converting our high schools into an institution resembling somewhat the secondary school of continental Europe.

The work of the first two years of our best colleges belongs properly to secondary education, and ought to be done in the high schools; that of the last two years, which is an attempt at university work, ought to be assigned to the university and the professional school.

This dropping out of the college would make it possible for our universities and professional schools to develop. The courses in these institutions ought to be lengthened by at least one year. The fact that we have no secondary schools of high grade, and the fact that we have developed the college before the university, and allowed it to occupy partly the ground of the secondary school and partly that of the university makes the problem of developing the university a difficult one.

Our technical schools are only of college rank. The best technical schools of Europe are of university rank. Students in this country will never in large numbers spend four years in a college, and four years more in a technical school. If the high schools would add two years to their course of study, and the technical schools would require these additional two years of preparation as a condition of admission, the latter could place themselves virtually on the same plane as the university; and it is difficult to see how they will ever be able to accomplish this in any other way.

Moreover, the extension of the high school course, so as to make it fit for the professional school, would lessen materially the expense of higher education to the student inasmuch as he would be able in most cases to fit for the professional school without leaving his home. In this way the door to the higher education would be opened to many against whom it is now closed.

There are, no doubt, many difficulties in the way of such re-adjustment of secondary and higher education, some of which, however, are probably more apparent than real. The value which all English speaking nations attach to the A. B. degree would probably cause deep regret at the disappearance of the college, for no one would advocate the conferring of degrees by a secondary school. This, however, is a matter of sentiment, and would probably not be allowed to outweigh positive educational and material advantages. The question as to what is

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to become of the college is one which would probably settle itself by a natural process of adjustment to changed conditions. The stronger ones could be converted into small universities doing superior work in a few related departments, and the weaker ones would do purely secondary work like the high schools.