

Letters from Abroad

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Teacher Education in Germany

During May and June, Countess Silvia von Brockdorff, representative of the Military Government, Education Branch, in Bavaria, and Dr. Paul Wilpert, professor of philosophy at the University of Munich and an active member of school reform committees in Bavaria, visited and worked in the United States. They visited public schools and universities and worked with members of state departments of education and the U. S. Office of Education. They share with us a brief statement describing plans for teacher education in the Western Zone of Germany, with particular reference to Bavaria.—GHF

THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM in Germany requires three different types of teachers. We need, first of all, the teacher for the Volksschule (school of all people). This school comprises elementary school and the first two years of junior high school.

Before 1933 the Volksschule teacher was educated in a teacher training institute which resembled the normal school, formerly well known in the States. It started after the seventh grade and ran through six years. These institutes were always combined with a boarding school. They gave a very thorough training in psychology and methods, combined with a good deal of practical experience. The financial burden was carried entirely by the State, including tuition and boarding. Nevertheless, the disadvantage of this system is obvious. The decision for a future vocation was made too early and was difficult to correct since the graduation from these institutes did not grant admittance to the university.

The third Reich established teacher education on the university level. Teachers

colleges were set up. The applicants had to be high school graduates, and work at the college level lasted two years. Since these colleges were entirely independent from the old universities, they were considered to be inferior. Professors lacked the necessary professional training. In addition, these colleges, established by the Nazis, were strongly under their influence. Teachers were neither instructed in subject matter nor did they get sound psychological training. Instead, they were brought up to be the most reliable agents of the party in their respective communities.

Mostly due to these facts, some of the German countries, Bavaria and Wurttemberg, returned to the old system immediately after the downfall of the third Reich, whereas the others stuck to the colleges and tried to change their spirit. Accordingly, the next paragraphs deal mainly with the reform of teacher education in Bavaria.

The job of the elementary teacher is considered of greatest importance for the whole people; therefore, for this teacher the very best training is necessary. He should have a very sound pedagogical education, but knowledge on subject matter may not be neglected. Since his task is just as important, or even more important, than that of the secondary teacher, his training should be on the same level.

It was therefore decided that the future elementary teacher will complete his studies at the university, i. e., at a pedagogical institute which will be a part of the university. The staff of this institute will consist of regular professors of the university and well-experienced teachers. The teacher student will have a very

thorough training in philosophy of education, psychology, child development, and methods. At the same time he will get practical experience in teaching and working with children throughout the full time of his studies. Plans have been made to extend this time to three years, but it is likely that there will be only two years at the beginning. In connection with this better training, a raise in salary is planned in an effort to also improve the social position of the elementary teacher.

As soon as the circumstances permit, these institutes will also introduce courses in school administration. They will be the centers of in-service training and research work in the field of education, and will also try to promote lay participation in school affairs. The first respective pedagogical institutes will be opened this fall at the three universities of Bavaria, in Munich, Wuerzburg, and Erlangen.

As mentioned before, we need two other types of teachers with a more differentiated training. In this field, there is uniformity in the Western Zone. The teacher for vocational schools has to finish his vocational training before he enrolls at the pedagogical institute. Besides the pedagogical and psychological training, he has to have thorough training in industrial arts, crafts, and home economics. For teachers in the commercial and agricultural subjects, special colleges can be established which would be part of the existing universities in this field. It is a main principle of school reform that no one should be allowed to teach without at least some pedagogical training. Up to now, the craftsman without any prepa-

ration for a teacher's job was frequently found in the vocational school.

The same principles are valid for the education of the third and last type of German teacher, who teaches at the college preparatory school. He has always had a very sound training of not less than four years university study, and in most cases even more, in the field of subject matter. Since the beginning of this century, he has one additional year of practical training. In accordance with our principles of school reform, his psychological and pedagogical education will be extended in the future. He will attend these classes together with the elementary and vocational teachers, thus giving a common basis for both. This system has already been established in Hessen. The present scientific and scholarly training of these teachers will in no case be reduced, since the standard of our college preparatory schools should not be lowered.

Everything which has been said is true for the Western Zones only. Teacher education in the Eastern Zone, as everything else, has been entirely separated and is shaped according to Russian pattern. Only recently this was emphasized by an important representative of the ministry for education of Thuringen.

The reform of teacher education has been considered to be the most important step in our whole program for the improvement of our schools. For the teacher is the center of the school, and we want him to be an all-round personality. To be able to educate our children, we want to have mature, independently thinking, socially feeling citizens.

ASCD Meeting in Atlantic City

Chalfonte-Haddon Hall

February 26, 1950

To be held in conjunction
with annual AASA meeting

- Nine study groups dealing with problems of curriculum leadership.
- Two general sessions.

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