SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN EDUCATION AND THAT OF MEXICO

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SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN
EDUCATION AND THAT OF MEXICO

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PREFACE

The search for information concerning the significant differences between American education and that of Mexico has proved interesting and informative to the author. The information contained herein, especially about Mexico, is compounded from the opinions of a number of authors. Inasmuch as I have not personally visited any schools of Mexico, I could not draw on my own information. I am indebted to the authors of a number of books and articles for the information given, many more than are cited.

Narbon B. Williams

Denton, Texas
August, 1945.
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CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY

Education in America, in the formal sense, began with the period of colonization. With no American culture and few traditions to draw from, it is natural that the early schools reflected the European backgrounds of their founders. Organized attempts at education may be said to have started in 1616 when King James I ordered the Bishop of London to collect funds for a college to be founded in Virginia. The massacre of 1622 put an end to the college. The first school of which there is a definite record was established at New Amsterdam in 1633.

From a sociological point of view an adequate philosophy for American education would recognize the social nature of man and the extent of reliance that he places in organized group life. This dependence is so complete that there cannot be any satisfactory enjoyment of life for the individual apart from a smoothly functioning society. The efficiency of society cannot be taken for granted; it results from the cultivation of sufficient consensus among group members to make it possible for them to act and to think in concert on the most vital matters.
In the history of American thought roughly five important movements may be identified: (1) Puritanism and Calvinism, (2) Democracy, (3) Transcendentalism, (4) Hegelian idealism and (5) Pragmatism or Instrumentalism.\(^1\)

All Puritans were Calvinistic, but not all Calvinism was Puritanic. New England Calvinism carried on in America many cultural and intellectual traditions imported from middle-class England; Scotch-Irish Calvinism, bred in poverty, transplanted to the frontiers of America a literalistic and non-intellectual way of life, in many cases thoroughly antagonistic toward rational exercise. Yet out of Calvinism America has derived much of its respect for "rugged individualism," coming in turn from a fearless readiness to face hard and evil things in the world.

The democratic philosophy of men like Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison was no naive sentiment; it probed the whole realm of human rights and launched a bold social experiment based upon what was felt to be irrefutable logic, centering in the inalienable right of every man to certain ways of expression, unhampered by previously imposed social restrictions.

Transcendentalism again stressed individual worth. It broke with Calvinistic literalism and fatalism and pointed to broadened visions of man and his world, and it contained

doctrines that could deteriorate into sentimentalism. Its doctrine teaches that final reality is obtained by reasoning and not by sense impressions.

Both Puritanism and democracy centered about revolts against hierarchies that exerted arbitrary authority over human liberty. Transcendentalism was a reaction against stilted Puritanism. Hegelian idealism represented a trend on the part of intellectuals toward the romanticism of transcendentalism. Hegelianism, as a philosophy, retained the sense of vast space and of human dignity, but it placed reason rather than feeling at the base of things. It heartened the thinking of men, who felt that logical system was not to be thrown over for pure insight. Later, another movement known as pragmatism strengthened the intellectual reaction against Hegelianism.

Calvinism, democracy, and even transcendentalism fitted admirably into that version of American destiny which envisioned the conquest of a continent, and the glory of a great free people enjoying the fruits of their labors. Another activity approached a culmination that was to affect American life more rapidly than that of any other human group—the movement known as applied science, or technology. Its origins lay in pure science, but America has been principally concerned with applications and the average American enjoys more of the fruits of those applications than any other world citizen.
Pragmatism was directly and most effectively a reaction against the abstraction of its predecessor, Hegelian idealism. Instrumentalism has attempted on the one hand to step further back into scientific backgrounds, and on the other to link its thinking with social problems. Calvinism and Hegelianism were importations; democracy, transcendentalism, and instrumentalism are American intellectual products in a more completely indigenous sense. Today, particularly in the educational field, the instrumental philosophy is dominant, but once more there are signs of reaction, not only in terms of older values it has either taken for granted or ignored, but also in terms of a broader sense.

Idealism, realism, and pragmatism are three of the main types of American philosophy today. Idealism is the oldest and traditionally it is the strongest. A large number of people remain idealists.

Idealism is the basic American tradition. The early American colonies were fairly homogeneous. During the period of formation of the new government idealism held sway. With the influx of immigrants of many different bloods, sects, and nationalities, the American ideology received its first challenge. However, many Americans still accept the Constitution as a divine document, and the tripodal scheme of government with its checks and balances as an expression of transcendentalism. Certainly, the public schools have indoctrinated pupils along these lines. The present-day American idealist holds that historic traditions are preferable to values derived from pragmatic philosophy or modern science.²

The idealist ranks subject matter extremely high and thus personality is given a lower rank. Methods of instruction in schools are formal and authoritative.

"Experimentation, verification, interpretation, and some degree of generalization are the watchwords of the scientific realist in the field of education. Personal opinion, subjectivity, and bias and prejudice are to be strictly subordinated."\(^3\)

Realists contend that there are things that exist independently of any relation to the mind. Those things are to be considered as they really are and adjustments are to be made accordingly.

Pragmatism is a method of thought in which stress is laid upon practical results as standards in conduct. According to this view, the truthfulness of an idea is to be determined by the consequences accruing when the idea is put to a practical test. If the results are what was anticipated, the original idea was a good one; if not, it was faulty.\(^4\)

According to the pragmatist, education is viewed as growth in individual capacities to deal with situations. He believes that education has no end beyond itself. The educational process must be continuous so that the impressionable mind of the child may become the flexible, thinking mind of a man.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 64.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 71.
Pragmatism has been called the American philosophy, but this is true only in the sense that it has had outstanding advocates in this country, has received here careful and systematic development, and is peculiarly congenial to the American cast of mind.\textsuperscript{5}

Progressive education is . . . not based upon any comprehensive system of philosophy, for it does not spring from a metaphysic or a definite theory of mind and knowledge. It did not originate from the pragmatic movement of John Dewey, as many have assumed, but in lieu of any basic principle of its own, it has, in recent years, sought shelter under his wing. Both Dewey and Bode, however, have criticized it severely.\textsuperscript{6}

Leaders of the Progressive movement have been so anxious to advance their theories that they have gone beyond John Dewey’s statements and credited him to the public with things he did not advocate. He believed that experiences are valuable only to the degree that they are instrumental in the process of adaptation to the problems of our environment.

The essentialists revolted against the pragmatic-progressive movement, but they have not become well organized.

We have three dominant expressions of American elementary education. Traditionalism is the first and recently it has been called essentialism. Progressivism is the second and it is almost the opposite of the first. The middle-of-the-road viewpoint is the third. Those who have the third belief take what they think is best of the first two, and if they have a real sense of values, seem to be freer.

\textsuperscript{5}Knobe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 334.

\textsuperscript{6}Frederick Eby, "Current Educational Theory in America," \textit{Queen's Quarterly}, XLIX (Spring, 1942), 20-30.
At present the traditional high school in America seems to be a fixture.

In American higher education all of the three main philosophies are found. The subject taught is the controlling factor for the philosophy used.

Mexican education is much older than that of United States. In fact, "The first school in the New World was established by Fray Pedro de Gante in 1523 at the village of Texcoco." Education was in the hands of the church and was for the select upper class until the new movement brought about by the revolution of 1910. The Mexican philosophies have been the outgrowth of this movement.

The dominant philosophy that came out of the revolution of 1910 was socialism. It was not sprung upon the people suddenly, for it is in reality an outgrowth of liberalism from colonial days. It is Mexico's answer to the need of reaching her masses of illiterate people. The characteristics and their effects on the schools are seen in the following quotation from George I. Sánchez.

1. The Socialistic School is Revolutionary. It seeks to accelerate the process of cultural, social, and economic development among the people. It is not satisfied to await the results of an evolutionary process by which, in time, the people might reap the fruits of a standard type of education. Pressed by the urgency of

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7George I. Sánchez, Mexico A Revolution by Education, p. 37.
the situation, these schools are striving to bridge the
gap of time by becoming active agents in the process of
social change.

2. The Socialistic School is Proletarian. Its
chief interest lies in the masses of the people and in
the unification, or nationalization, of these masses for
their benefit and in their interests. The new schools
are proletarian as contrasted with the bourgeois schools
that had existed in Mexico before 1920. They are con-
cerned with the problems in the middle and upper classes
only to the extent that such an interest may be of benefit
to the great masses of the Mexican people. In a sense
they may be described as being anti-bourgeois, anti-
aristocratic, and anti-capitalistic. Through every phase
of their programme of activities, they seek to carry on a
programme of socialization and of nationalization.

3. The Socialistic School is a Nationalistic School--
a school that believes in the creation of a national
spirit and that is militant in behalf of the cultural and
economic sovereignty of Mexico as a nation. It is a
school that wants Mexico for Mexicans and that seeks to
stimulate an appreciation of the value of Mexican ideas,
Mexican institutions, Mexican accomplishments, and Mexican
culture. It seeks to accentuate those aspects of Mexican
life that give Mexico individuality and character as a
nation. In short, it insists that Mexico is no longer a
colonial province to be exploited at will by foreign na-
tions and ideas but rather that Mexico is a sovereign
power with cultural attributes worthy of recognition.

4. The Socialistic School is a Popular School--
democratic as contrasted to aristocratic. It seeks to
exercise a levelling influence whereby the masses of the
people are raised to a position of the greatest promi-
nence in Mexican life. It is eager to train the prole-
tariat in such a way that the whole of Mexican life shall
reflect the will of the great majority of the people.
This democratic ideal, carried to the point of socialism,
is the essence of things for which Mexicans have hoped
and which has been back of Mexican rebellions against
domination and exploitation.

5. The Socialistic School is Rationalistic, en-
deavouring to insculcate beliefs that stand the test of
intellectual and rational examination. Many of the evils
by which Mexico and Mexicans have been beset are generally
attributed to the docility of the Mexican masses in
blindly accepting the point of view of exploiting agencies. One purpose of the Socialistic School is to counteract the docile acceptance of religious beliefs and superstitions by introducing a rationalizing element into the thinking of the people. While the School is not interested in combating the spiritual beliefs insculpted by religion, it is extremely interested in seeing that an unthinking acceptance or extension of these beliefs does not interfere with the social, economic, and cultural well-being of Mexicans. It makes every effort to divorce the spiritual life of the individual from his daily social and civic practices. Particularly, it seeks to emphasize in the minds of the masses the difference between religion, as a purely personal and spiritual belief, and the political and economic practices of religious organizations. It desires to free the devout and fanatical masses from the cultural and economic exploitations carried on by the corporate bodies who represent the agencies for the dissemination of religious beliefs. 8

Other philosophical ideas have been introduced into Mexico, but the socialistic ideas are so firmly set that no other trends have been successful to date. Mexico is making every effort to unify her heterogenous masses into one people, and she realizes that education is the only way it can be done.

Regardless of the country, society expects education to prepare individuals to function under necessary conditions of organized group life. Schooling is the more formal aspect of education, but much of the educative process is carried on outside the classroom and away from the jurisdiction of the professional teacher. The school cannot function independently of the whole complex of society, and it reflects mainly the philosophy of the world from which it draws its substance.

8Ibid., pp. 103-105.
To answer this demand of society, Mexico has found her answer in a socialistic philosophy of education. United States still clings heavily to the idealistic philosophy, but pragmatism and realism are being exercised, too. We find that in order to keep up with the quickly changing social order many traditions are going to have to give way to experiments and education that provides preparation for participation in civic and social life.
CHAPTER II

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

Every phase of American life has undergone many changes since our forefathers laid the foundation of our country in the early colonial days. Education of some sort is almost as old as our oldest cities. In the earliest days education was primarily for men preparing to go into the legal or ministerial professions. Neither teachers nor money were available in quantities to justify public education then.

Benjamin Franklin sponsored the first academy in America, Academy and Charitable School, in 1753 in the Province of Pennsylvania. Other academies came into existence rapidly so that by 1850 there were six thousand academies educating more than two hundred fifty thousand pupils. These academies were the forerunners of our modern private or independent schools.

Public education was largely limited to the elementary level until after the Civil War. In 1874 the Kalamazoo decision legalized secondary schools, and high schools increased rapidly. As public schools increased, independent schools decreased. Private schools exist today and are playing an important role in preparing people for leadership. However, independent schools must meet requirements of the state so that their pupils' credits will be transferable to public schools.
In the United States the several states have the constitutional power to control public education. Each state has its school laws and uses its own discretion as to how far she exercises her authority. The need for separating school administration from politics is brought out in the following quotation:

While the schools of a democracy must be democratic, the state is merely the immediate agent, not the sole arbiter. Society, acting through the state or through some other agency, has the ultimate power to influence or even control the schools. In fact, it is possible to regard many aspects of our educational system as constituting a quasi-state or a parallel sub-state. The boards of education are elected by the people and they frequently have the power to levy, collect, and expend taxes without restraint by other areas of the state. Of the 191 cities in the United States with a population of more than fifty thousand, 99 of them have school boards which are fiscally independent. While political scientists tend to favor direct governmental control of school finances and the classification of the schools as important but not peculiar divisions of the state, many school administrators regard fiscal independence of the schools as a fundamental to democratic, non-partisan education.¹

Various pressure groups have continually tried to exert their influence over the state in its conduct of the schools. The state has been unable to meet the demands of all. She can and does insist upon the kind of instruction that will preserve her from destruction.

Let us take Texas as a typical state and study her administrative set-up.

The Constitution of the State of Texas includes one Article with seventeen sections devoted to education. An amendment providing for teacher retirement funds was adopted in 1936. In pursuit of the power granted in the Constitution, Texas legislatures have passed many laws governing public schools.

The Texas Constitution provides:

Sec. 1. PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO BE ESTABLISHED.—A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.²

The administrative set-up has undergone many changes since the time of its origin to enable it to come to us in its present form. The State Board of Education heads the administration.

Sec. 8. BOARD OF EDUCATION.—The Legislature shall provide by law for a State Board of Education, whose members shall be appointed or elected in such manner and by such authority and shall serve for such terms as the Legislature shall prescribe not to exceed six years. The said board shall perform such duties as may be prescribed by law.³

On October 2, 1929, the Forty-first Legislature provided that a board of nine lay members be organized. The members are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate.

²See Constitution of the State of Texas, Article VII, Section 1.

³Ibid., Article VII, Section 8.
They serve for terms of six years with three retiring biennially. The board elects its own president and the State Superintendent is ex officio secretary. Some of the functions of the board are:

1. To consider and report biennially to the Governor on the financial needs of the public free schools.

2. To recommend to the Governor concerning proposals for the establishment of new educational institutions.

3. To consider and report on financial needs, scope, and work of State institutions of higher learning, and to recommend such changes in their courses of study as the needs may warrant, with especial reference to elimination of any needless waste or duplication of work.

4. To select a textbook committee of five experienced and active educators in the public schools of the State to examine books submitted for adoption and recommend thereon to the State Board.

5. To consider the athletic necessities and activities of the public schools and to report biennially to the Governor the proper legal division of time and money to be devoted to athletics.

6. To prescribe rules and regulations for the certification of teachers and for examining applicants for such certificates in accordance with the State laws.4

The State Department of Education, headed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, administers to the needs of the several districts and local schools. There are a number of divisions in the department to meet the various phases of administration. In 1933, State Superintendent L. A. Woods reorganized the department and created twenty-two

districts with a resident deputy State superintendent in charge. "The deputy State superintendents administer the high school accrediting provisions of the law, the rural aid law, and otherwise cooperate in promoting the public school interests of the State."5

The system of districting large units into smaller divisions dates back to the seventeenth century in United States. As small settlements grew into larger cities which were divided by natural barriers, the outlying districts obtained authority to have their own schools and to levy taxes for school support. This was begun in New England but it proved to be suitable in other areas with the westward expansion. Thus the system of district administration has become a tradition throughout the nation.

Within the deputy State superintendents' districts are found other units. Each county has its superintendent and each county is divided into smaller units with local superintendents. Each local school must conform to the regulations of the State system of accrediting and administration.

Schools are financed in part by the State and in part by the smaller units. The State has a permanent school fund which was made possible when Texas was annexed to the United States. She had a vast amount of public lands which she

5Ibid., p. 117.
was allowed to keep. She has gradually given much of this land to the schools and has sold portions of it. The money obtained from the sale of the lands has been invested in interest bearing bonds which are held by the State treasurer for the benefit of the schools. The State also has an available school fund which is derived from taxes. These funds are distributed to the local districts on a per capita basis of children within the school age and according to the type of district and its local needs. Local districts assess and collect taxes for the school district and whenever possible become financially independent of the state except for the per capita distribution.

From the early sixteenth century when the Spanish conquerors landed in Mexico, education and practically every phase of life in that country were in the hands of the church. The first schools were originated and conducted by the Catholic fathers. These schools were conducted for the children of the Spaniards and for the higher class of natives. A great deal of good was done, but the great masses of the population were neglected. Mexico was inhabited by millions of Indians, many "mestizos" who were a mixture of Spanish and Indian, and the "criollos" who were Spaniards born in Mexico. The Indians far outnumbered the other two groups, but they were illiterate and were thus enslaved or pushed back. The "mestizos" were outcasts from the other two groups because they were not of pure blood of either type.
This mixture of nationalities made for discontent and chaos. At the same time a struggle was going on between the Church and the State. Another trouble was that Mexico was being used for exploitation by the Spaniards. Mexico was termed as colonial territory, but the only goal of the conquerors was to get the wealth of the country and take it back to Spain. Mexico finally won her independence from Spain in 1821, but conditions did not improve to any appreciable extent. The mass of the people was still held in servitude and ignorance.

In 1910 a bloody rebellion broke out and for the following ten years confusion and chaos continued. In 1917 a Constitution was adopted which gave the responsibility of education to the State. The masses were beginning to be noticed and the need for public education was seen. One of the strongest cries of the Revolution was "Educar es redimir" ("To educate is to redeem"). The State began to establish schools in the cities, but rural Mexico was still neglected.

In 1921, under President Obregon, the federal government was given authority to establish schools. The president created the Federal Ministry of Education and placed Jose Vasconcellos as Secretary. The new Secretary was very enthusiastic and great progress was made during his term. From that time to the present many changes have taken place in the National Department of Education. Let us study it to see it in its recent condition.
All federal activities in education are included in the work of the National Department of Education. This department is housed in Mexico City in a large building which is of typical Spanish-type with the patio in the center. The corridors are decorated with murals painted by Diego Rivera which represent the struggle of the Indian from slavery to freedom. The chief of the department is the Secretary of Education and Fine Arts. The Secretary is appointed by the President of the Republic and is a member of the Cabinet. The Department is divided into a number of departments and minor divisions which require the service of many people.

Mexico is divided into districts and supervisors representing the Secretary of Education carry on the supervision of education. The qualifications of the supervisors are:

All supervisors must be physically, morally, and mentally sound. They must have been teachers, and, upon appointment, must have had not less than five years of successful teaching experience. Finally, the supervisor must be a graduate of an approved normal school or have had equivalent training.\(^6\)

The duties of the supervisors are:

The supervisor gives attention to class visitations, the selection and placement of teachers, conferences, demonstrations, exhibitions, reports, and supplies.\(^7\)

Directors and special teachers are sent from the Department of Education to help out in various specialized work.

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\(^6\) Henry Lester Smith, *Education in Mexico*, p. 23.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 23.
Teachers in Mexico are federal employees and enjoy the privileges granted to any other government employee. They are under a system of pensions and tenure and are on a twelve month provisional basis before the law is applicable to them.

Only those teachers who have fulfilled the law are allowed the benefits of the tenure law. To receive these benefits it is necessary for the teacher to attend the normal school in Mexico City at least every five years. He must study courses in the faculty of Philosophy and Letters or courses established by the Secretary of Education. Two courses must be studied: (1) teaching methods, and (2) subject matter to be taught. If it is impossible for a teacher to go to Mexico City at the end of each five years, he may present an original thesis on the subject which he teaches. If he leaves the profession of his own free will, he will have the right to be reinstated if there should be vacancies in his field and if there is no other teacher who can take the position. A teacher cannot be dismissed after successfully teaching a school for twelve months except for incompetency or for causes of a criminal nature.

The tenure law of Mexico provides for compulsory retirement, with a pension, at the age of seventy years.8

Municipal and state schools still exist in Mexico, but they must conform to the requirements of the federal system so they are rapidly becoming a part of the National Department of Education.

The past twenty-three years under federal administration have proved effective to take education to the masses and to unite the inhabitants of Mexico under a spirit of national pride.

8Ibid., p. 20.
CHAPTER III
CURRICULUM

Three types of schools were developed in colonial New England. They were the Latin grammar school, the writing school, and the dame school. The Latin grammar school was the forerunner of our modern high school and presupposed preliminary training in English. Its graduates became candidates for college entrance. Writing schools were for young boys who had previously learned to read, and its instruction was limited to writing and arithmetic. Each of these two types of schools was restricted to boys only. Dame schools were conducted by a lady in the community in her own home, and she taught reading and spelling.

In the Middle colonies emphasis was placed upon religion and fundamental subjects rather than preparation for higher education. Many of these schools admitted girls.

Public education in United States was mostly limited to elementary levels until after the Civil War. In these schools the teaching of "the three R's," spelling, and history formed the basic curriculum.

Today our schools reflect the trends of the changing social order. We now consider education as essential for girls as it is for boys, and our states have compulsory school laws for children roughly between the ages of six and sixteen.
Preschool education is by no means universal in the United States. Many large city systems provide kindergarten training, and much preschool training is conducted by private schools. The primary aim of these schools is to teach children to work and to play together. This greatly facilitates the work of the first grade teacher. Preschool education in Mexico is even more rare than in United States.

Elementary schools in United States and Mexico have many similarities, but there are some significant differences. In the United States we have had public elementary education so long that the vast majority of our population more or less takes it for granted. Educationally it is just a stepping stone to higher education, and it is becoming the general practice for students to go on to junior and senior high school levels. The traditional subjects are still taught with the addition of art, music, physical education, and courses for individual expression. Rural and city schools are different in methods of instruction, but the same basic material is taught.

Mexican public elementary education has had a much more illustrious evolution. When the Ministry of Education was created and José Vasconcelos was made secretary, he felt the urgent need of carrying education to the rural areas. Trained teachers were scarce, funds were low, and school sites were practically non-existent. Everything seemed against rural education, but with a missionary zeal he conceived a plan and put it to work.
Volunteers went to work as teachers among the Indians, who constitute practically all of the rural population, but they were untrained workers. One obstacle that stood in the way was that each Indian tribe spoke its own dialect--there was no national language. The teacher had to learn the dialect of the group with which he worked. The Secretary of Education saw that the teachers needed help; so he gathered together some "missioners" who went about working with the different schools. The missioners had to help the teachers discern what the needs of the community were, what materials were available, and to suggest to the Secretary what could be done. Such an experiment took courage and a good deal of time to accomplish much, but by the end of five years one thousand rural federal schools existed, attended by sixty-five thousand pupils. These schools broke from the traditional scheme of teaching reading and writing and tried to teach the natives something to better their economic status. The departments of education and agriculture worked together closely to teach the people how to get returns from working the land, how to improve personal cleanliness, and how to improve their living quarters. They were convinced that this was necessary before any progress could be made teaching the conventional subjects.

In 1925 the missioners were transformed into a corps of federal inspectors. They became more administrative in their supervision and broadened the scope of their work. The rural schools grew rapidly in number and reached every corner of the country.
Teachers were still untrained; so in 1923 the idea of Cultural Missions was put to work. This experiment was very unique in its work, but its success led to expansion and improvement of the rural schools. A corps of workers including a physical training teacher, a social worker who taught hygiene, first aid and vaccination, a choral music teacher, a specialist in industries, an agriculturist, and an organizer selected a community in which to set up a mission. The workers first went into the community and familiarized themselves with the people and won their confidence. At the same time they were surveying the needs in order to make their work count. The original missions lasted only three weeks, but as the plan progressed the programs extended to eight or ten weeks.

When things were ready the teachers from the surrounding rural schools came for the period of intensive training. They learned what and how to teach the people in their own communities. Often improvements were made in the local school building or a new one was built. Local farmers were helped to put in or care for their crops, housewives were taught better methods of taking care of their families, civic improvements were made, and local industries were either begun or improved upon. The mission was a combination of effort on the part of local people with teachers and missionaries.

Evenings were spent at the schools in learning to read and in singing. The closing event was always a festival. The
people of Mexico find it easy to participate in a festival. Local talent was always used on those occasions and the community hated to see the Mission group leave.

The work of the Cultural Missions was discontinued three or four years ago. It had served a long and useful career and provided in-service training for teachers until other facilities were available for pre-service training.

Rural schools in Mexico today combine the rudiments of education with the practical needs of the community. Half a day is spent in the classroom and half the time in the fields or industrial work. The rural elementary schools are decreasing illiteracy and helping to improve the cultural and economic status of rural Mexico.

Different places in United States have different plans for the division of work between elementary and secondary schools. Eleven-year schools used to exist extensively, but now most schools have a twelve-year program. The traditional schools follow the plan of eight years of elementary school and four years of high school. Some schools have the six, three, three plan--six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of senior high school. Still other schools have the six, two, four and some have the seven, two, three plan. Regardless of the plan, everything above the elementary school is secondary or higher education.

During the twentieth century the plan of junior high schools has made its advent into the American schools. The
junior high school affords the student the opportunity of experiencing departmental work before he reaches high school. The later trends also afford exploratory courses in junior high school. By this plan the only subjects in which a student is graded are English, history, and mathematics. A period of six or nine weeks is given him in which to take exploratory subjects such as art, shop work, home economics, and science or health. By taking these short courses the student has the opportunity of finding his aptitudes and he is saved time in later years by not having to experiment then.

High school curricula vary in different places and even in the same high school from year to year. A typical four-year course is outlined in the following standard academic curriculum.

A Standard Academic Curriculum

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<td>Algebra II</td>
<td>Plane</td>
<td>Solid Geometry (½) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Adv. Arithmetic (½)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outlined curriculum in the previous table would meet the requirements for almost any college entrance credits. However, there are many students who never plan to go to college and who desire something different from the traditional academic course. Many high schools offer vocational courses to meet the needs of such students. Typical four-year courses for commercial and vocational curricula are outlined herewith. The vocational outline calls for vocational agriculture. Many schools are best equipped to teach this course, and it is the greatest need of the boys in the community; however, other localities would not have sufficient demand to merit offering it. In the latter places shop work is often offered and mechanical drawing, wood shop, metal shop, and auto mechanics might be substituted in this standard curriculum.

A Standard Commercial Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Business Training</td>
<td>Com. Geog. (½)</td>
<td>Bookkeeping or Bookkeeping (½)</td>
<td>Stenography I &amp; Com. Law (½)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typewriting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Typewriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Math.</td>
<td>Algebra or</td>
<td>Plane Geometry</td>
<td>Stenography II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Algebra</td>
<td>Com. Arith.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>or Secretarial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Science</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Train.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civics (½)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economics (½)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²Ibid., p. 74.
### A Standard Vocational Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Business Training or Art</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>American History</td>
<td>Civics (½)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Science</td>
<td>Algebra or or Science Plane Geometry Pub. Spk. (½)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Math.</td>
<td>or Algebra (½) or Modern Lan. Com. Law (½) or 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaking 1½</td>
<td>Homemaking 1½</td>
<td>Homemaking 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Bookkeeping or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Modern Lan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical education is required as a part of every curriculum though it is not listed in any of the above standards.

Secondary schools are still primarily idealistic in the planning and presentation of their curricula. Most schools try to keep their accrediting with the state department of education, and those that are members of an association such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools are anxious to retain membership in such an association. Changes are being made, however, and the curriculum is becoming more flexible in many places.

Secondary education in Mexico has been much slower in development than the elementary schools. Prior to the new movement begun in 1921, high schools were for the sole purpose of preparing students to go to the National University or a normal school. Since the federal government has

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Ibid., p. 74.
assumed responsibility for education many changes have taken place. A school of importance which made noteworthy changes was the National Preparatory School in Mexico City. It was divided into two cycles: "a three year 'common-to-all' cycle and a specialized two- or three-year cycle above it leading to admission into the University." The common-to-all cycle was moved to new quarters, and the higher cycle remained to carry on much as it had done before.

In order to understand the Mexican secondary schools, we must know that they do not include as many years of instruction as American schools do. The elementary schools are divided into two cycles: the lower cycle of four years may be used as a preliminary to going to rural normal schools or to taking vocational courses of the upper cycle level. The upper cycle, consisting of the fifth and sixth grades, is needed as prerequisite to attending secondary schools, technical and vocational schools, or the five year normal schools. Secondary schools consist of the seventh, eighth and ninth grades and serve as prerequisites to higher technical and vocational schools, the National Preparatory School, and the primary normal schools. Any education received above the ninth grade is considered higher education, or comparable to college and university training in United States. The

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4Cameron D. Ebaugh, "Secondary Education in Mexico," The High School Quarterly, XXIII (April, 1935), 146-152.
following chart will give a graphic explanation of the plan of the schools in Mexico.\(^5\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Normal Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Five-year Normal School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher technical and vocational schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Normal Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Technical &amp; Vocational schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Rural normal Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Upper cycle of Vocational courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Elementary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Federal rural Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lower cycle of elementary schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7   | Preschool education

The ages on the chart cannot be relied upon because Mexicans are often older than seven when they enter school.

Mexican secondary schools have had three primary problems which have slowed their progress. The first is the slow development of an educational profession. When schools were taken away from the church, lay people were used to teach only the work in which they had specialized. Thus teachers taught one subject in more than one school. In later years students have continued to specialize their training and this habit has been hard to stop. Teachers can earn more money by contracting to teach in several schools than they can by accepting one full-time position.

The second problem is the personalistic administration in the National Department of Education. Instead of having a uniform policy which is followed by each Secretary, the department reflects the personal ideas of whoever is in office at the time. This is even evident in the textbooks. When a man is selected to be the Secretary of Education he calls the textbook writers together and outlines the general policies that he plans to put into effect; then they write new books in compliance with his ideas. Octavio Vejar Vazquez, who was Secretary in 1943, was endeavoring to overcome this obstacle. He called a National Congress of Education which consisted of representative educators throughout the country and asked for ideas that would lead to the formulation of permanent educational policies.
The third problem is the important part that the students play in the administration of the schools. European schools in medieval times started this practice and it has been handed down since then. Administrative bodies often are made up of an equal number of teachers and students. These groups select the personnel and determine the curriculum. Strikes are not uncommon among the students in protest if things do not please them.

In spite of these problems the schools are making progress and some general observations may be made as to the curriculum of the average secondary school. City schools follow more along the plan outlined than rural secondary schools do. The rural schools are often a continuation of the program started in the elementary school. The following list gives an idea of the subjects studied, the length of time spent on each, and the year of high school in which it is offered.⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games and sport</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>first year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>first and second years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>first and second years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational subjects</td>
<td>first year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>first year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>second and third years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoology</td>
<td>second year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican history</td>
<td>third year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>third year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy and physiology</td>
<td>third year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General history</td>
<td>third year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>third year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶Ibid., pp. 693-706.
The following quotation from Ebaugh summarizes the curricular aims of the Mexican secondary schools.

All courses offered in these schools are intimately related to the everyday life of the community, varying greatly from community to community and from year to year in the same community. To a notable extent the subject matter has been analyzed into activities in terms of pupil experiences, and ample encouragement is afforded towards self-realization through conscious effort. Activities outside the school are given the same or more importance than the regular classroom work. Excursions, hikes, and camping trips are utilized both for curricular purposes and for physical training. For the achievement of proper democratic development in keeping with the aims and purposes of modern education, the needs, capacities, and interests of the pupils are considered at every turn and the subject matter is made to conform to them.7

College and university training in United States and Mexico have many similarities. In the United States there are many and varied institutions of higher learning. There are many institutions which still cling to the traditional administration and curriculum, and there are some which are making definite breaks from tradition. The University of Chicago is famous for its experiments in putting new subjects and methods of instruction to work. In Mexico the institutions on the university level are still traditional and are stressing the training of individuals for professional success.

Mexico has a method of training rural and elementary teachers which is distinctive and worthy of study.

7Ebaugh, op. cit., pp. 146-152.
By referring to the chart on page twenty-eight, we can see that different kinds of normal schools exist in Mexico. A two-year normal school may be entered upon completion of the lower cycle of elementary school. This type of school was used extensively in the earlier days of the present educational movement to prepare natives of the Indian tribes to be teachers in their own communities. Upon completion of the upper cycle of elementary school one may enter a five-year normal school which is parallel to secondary education and preparatory school. Upon completion of secondary school a student may enter a primary normal school which is parallel to the preparatory school. Students interested in preparing to be secondary school teachers or administrators or supervisors may go on to superior normal school which is conducted in connection with the University.

Teacher training in Mexico is progressing so well that in a short time she will be well supplied with well-trained teachers. It is possible for poorer students to get the training now even though they do not have sufficient funds. Scholarships are offered for students who are ambitious and who show marked ability. This is commendable because the majority of Mexico’s inhabitants are still very poor.

The National Normal School, which is a coeducational institution founded in 1925, leads the other normal schools in the preparation of elementary and kindergarten teachers. This school has two cycles of training—a secondary cycle
and a professional cycle. Graduates of the Preparatory School are not required to take the secondary cycle. All students take the three-year professional cycle, and the curriculum for it is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th>Third Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences</td>
<td>Educational psychology</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmography</td>
<td>Principles of education</td>
<td>Principles of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meteorology</td>
<td>Educational sociology</td>
<td>History of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational psychology</td>
<td>Practice teaching</td>
<td>School organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School hygiene</td>
<td>Minor industries</td>
<td>and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice teaching</td>
<td>A trade</td>
<td>Practice teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Agricultural practice</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor industries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first year has a weekly recitation load of thirty hours, the second year twenty-eight hours, and the third year twenty-nine hours. It is to be noticed that practice teaching is taken each year. In fact, "Practice teaching consumes four hours each week the first year, six hours the second year, and ten hours the third year."9

All of the rural normal schools are under the supervision of the National Normal School. Graduates of rural normal schools who desire to become secondary teachers may do so after having taught in the elementary school and then upon completion of additional training in the National Normal School.

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8Smith, op. cit., p. 67. 9Ibid., p. 67.
Mexico as a nation is a strong believer in extensive physical education training. From the first grade on through higher education physical training is required for all students. To strengthen her program she has a special normal school for physical education teachers. Secondary school and primary normal school must be completed as prerequisites for admission to the Normal School for Physical Education Teachers. This is a coeducational institution and classes in principles and theories are taught to the mixed groups.

The three-year curriculum of this normal school includes biological sciences, physical sciences, history, English, psychology, hygiene, methods, singing, organization and administration, tests and measurements, and massage and therapy. In addition, students must study the theory and practice of the various sports, dances, calisthenics, rhythms, etc. Each student then specializes in one or two sports.\(^{10}\)

Examination of the curricula of the schools of United States reveals the strong influence of the idealistic school; however, the other two schools of philosophy are making their impressions and are leading out in the effort to keep astride the changing social order.

Mexico's curricular trends can be explained in the following quotation:

> Any survey of Mexican schools, however, must take into account the fact that the present educational movement is one with national politics—that education and government are inseparable and that schools are agents of a socialistic reform administration.\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 68.  
\(^{11}\)Sanchez, op. cit., p. 94.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

A comparative study of the educational systems of the United States and of Mexico reveals that great progress has been made in the two countries. However, we cannot but note the rapid progress that Mexico has made in the past twenty to twenty-five years. In 1920 approximately sixty-five per cent of the total population of Mexico was illiterate and no educational opportunities were extended to the common people. According to the latest statistics available at present, Mexico's estimated illiteracy in 1934 was fifty-four per cent.¹ This represents considerable improvement in fourteen years. Though her progress has been rapid, Mexico has much to do to attain the success reached by the United States. According to the 1930 census, four and three-tenths per cent of the total population of the United States over ten years of age are illiterate.² Neither country has attained perfection and each is pressing forward to greater accomplishments.

²Ibid., p. 383.
One of the most significant differences between the educational systems of the two countries is the administration. There are four factors which may be used to explain why the United States has state control and Mexico has federal control. In the first place, state control in the United States dates back to the days of the formation of the Constitution and the conflict between states' rights and federal rights. Although compromises were made about the government, education was one solemn right of the states that was preserved and guarded. A second factor is that Mexico is a poor nation, and the federal government is the only public agent with sufficient funds to operate a school system that will meet the needs of the nation as a whole. A third factor is the tradition in Mexico to centralize all public enterprise in the hands of the federal government. The last factor is that Mexico's educational movement has come at a time when the trend throughout the world is toward centralization.

State control in the United States has not seen complete success. Let us note here a few of the shortcomings under state control. In the first place we note uneven quality in the several state systems and in the local schools within the states. Referring to Texas again, we find that there are hundreds of school districts which have the least equipment possible to conduct a school and the salaries of the teachers are barely to the level of the state salary schedule. On the other hand we find schools in wealthy oil
communities, grain farming districts, ranching areas, and large cities which have the most modern equipment and the teachers are paid well so far as this professional bracket is concerned. Universal educational ideas cannot be attained without more nearly equalized schools to provide them.

A second shortcoming is that the states have not as yet been able to raise the standard of civic conduct materially. The average citizen avoids jury service, if possible, and he complains about payment of taxes. National elections reveal that only a small per cent of the qualified voters go to the polls. Schools are the most logical agents to impress upon individuals their responsibility in civic life.

The last shortcoming to which we shall call attention is the slowness of the schools to develop a reasoned and genuine patriotism in the hearts of the people. They have tended to teach flag saluting and learning of the pledge of allegiance to the flag, but they have somehow failed to teach the deeper meanings behind these acts. They have taught the pupils to glorify our nation to the extent of creating a feeling of ill-will toward foreigners and foreign nations. During the war they have taught students the virtues of the ally countries, but this must not stop with the termination of hostilities. The schools must build a national pride, but it is important to teach a spirit of world understanding which will produce world patriotism.
The achievements under state control outnumber the shortcomings. First, school enrollment has steadily enlarged toward universality. We are told that in the days of reconversion to civilian industry that child labor laws will again be strictly enforced and public education for all will be emphasized anew. Second, schools are largely responsible for the decrease in illiteracy in United States. The rugged individualist who educates himself is fast disappearing. Third, schools have contributed greatly to the raising of the nation's cultural level. It has been proved that education is the means of giving the nation the improvements it desires. Fourth, schools have worked for the Americanization of the foreigners who have come to the country. Teaching the language and customs to the younger generation of immigrants has helped reach the older ones. Fifth and last, specialized universities, colleges, and high schools have rendered great service to the people. Perhaps the outstanding contributions have been in the field of agriculture and in vocational training. Localities with vocational schools often depend on them for mechanical service, printing, and other local community needs.

Modern educational aims may well be summarized for Mexico in the following two quotations.

In regard to educational philosophy in general—the federal schools of Mexico are seen to be functioning examples of the most advanced principles and practices.
Of the vast number of educational experiments being conducted throughout the world, none is more far-reaching and interesting than Mexico’s.3

L. S. Pontón, Minister of Education in Mexico in 1941, makes this interesting comment.

We are trying to create a school genuinely Mexican, one such as our people need to better the hygienic, social and cultural conditions of their life, a school capable of accentuating the qualities of our people and of creating new generations productive of work, firm in conviction, healthy in body and mind, and optimistic in the face of the cruellest tragedies of life. We do not pretend that we have solved all our problems. We are aware of our limitations but we are zealously trying to overcome them because we are convinced that in the education of the people lies the true greatness of our nation.4

Mexico's educational success cannot be measured only in the decrease in her illiteracy. In twenty-five years she has seen an increase from a very few schools for the privileged class to many thousands of schools scattered throughout her length and breadth which are being attended by the common people as well as the privileged class. The schools have been the means of giving the common people new methods of work, improved habits of sanitation, a new interest in a feeling of national pride, and worthwhile ways of spending leisure hours. It must be remembered, however, that this success has been a part of a revolutionary movement and its true success cannot be estimated until its permanence is tested with years of experience.

3Cameron D. Ebaugh, The National System of Education in Mexico, p. 141.

The United States is the younger of the two nations, but her educational progress has been attained in connection with political and territorial growth. Throughout this time she has developed foundations on which she has built one of the best all-round systems in the modern world. She has led out in many efforts toward a better understanding between the United States and the world. Students have been exchanged with many countries, including Mexico. Through the pursuit of higher education, and through the classroom contacts these students have created warm feelings for each other. Several colleges in the United States, such as North Texas State Teachers College and Texas State College for Women, have conducted complete summer schools or have sponsored courses in Mexican schools during the past few years. These have proved to be a source of understanding between pupils and teachers of each country.

The United States has had a much longer period of education for the masses and is, therefore, far ahead of Mexico in its general program. Education in Mexico has made excellent progress in the last twenty-five years. As long as the present government policies continue the future looks bright. Only time will prove the relative merits of the state control of education in United States and the federally controlled schools in Mexico.
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