PROTECTION OF AUTHOR’S COPYRIGHT

This copy has been supplied by the Library of the University of Otago on the understanding that the following conditions will be observed:

1. To comply with s56 of the Copyright Act 1994 [NZ], this thesis copy must only be used for the purposes of research or private study.

2. The author's permission must be obtained before any material in the thesis is reproduced, unless such reproduction falls within the fair dealing guidelines of the Copyright Act 1994. Due acknowledgement must be made to the author in any citation.

3. No further copies may be made without the permission of the Librarian of the University of Otago.
Exploring Educational Efficiency In New Zealand Primary and Post-Primary Schooling, 1900 - 1945.

Anna Kathleen Frost

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the idea that between the years 1900-1945 equality of educational opportunity was an ideal used to justify the expansion of the New Zealand education system along efficiency-oriented lines. Utilising Taylor’s efficiency treatise (applied to education) and Beeby’s theoretical conceptualisation of an educational ‘myth’, this study demonstrates that equality of educational opportunity not only validated the efficient expansion of New Zealand’s national system of education but also, against a changing social backdrop, moulded it to ‘fit’ with the changing egalitarian ethos of the day, thereby satisfying the growing public demand for greater social justice and fairness through its sincere attempts to eliminate student ‘wastage’. Embedded in common social aspirations, the myth of equality of educational opportunity served to cushion if not actually guise the quest for greater educational efficiency. From the introduction of the Secondary Schools Act in 1903 which liberated post-primary education - ‘throwing the doors of the schools open’ by way of the academic Proficiency test, through to the implementation of a common core curriculum in 1945, wherein the needs of all students were to be equally catered for, nurtured and developed by the school system - this study will reveal that although it was the efficiency doctrine that underpinned the reforms, it remained hidden behind the name of ‘equality’. Applying this thesis to specific time periods - that is 1900-1914, 1915-1929 and 1930-1945 - and surveying the expansion of schooling in New Zealand, with particular reference to the development of post-primary education, it will be shown that whilst attempts to eliminate educational ‘waste’ were justified on the basis of meritocracy and the extension of the ‘equality’ ideal, it failed to capture the imagination of ambitious ‘talented’ students. Because educational efficiency clearly aimed to keep the ‘ordinary’ student in his/her rightful place, when framed within an ‘equality’ context this ideal became not only persuasive and popular but also a powerful way to legitimate the unfair treatment (and educational confinement) of pupils in a democracy. Indeed, with hindsight, it is clear that:

The school apart from life, apart from politics, is a lie, a hypocrisy. Bourgeois society indulged in this lie, covering up the fact that it was using the schools as a means of domination by declaring that the school was politically neutral, and in the service of all.¹

Preface

On completion of this thesis I feel it is important to acknowledge the assistance of individuals without which my job would have been impossible.

I would like to thank my family for their motivating words ‘we have every faith in you’ and my supervisor, Dr. Howard Lee, for his tremendous support, guidance and patience.
Table of Contents:

Declaration Concerning Thesis ........................................... i
Title Page ............................................................................. ii
Abstract ............................................................................... iii
Preface .................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents ................................................................... v

Chapter One - (Introduction):
Frederick Winslow Taylor: Educational Myths and New Zealand’s Egalitarian Culture.
pp. 1 - 32.

Chapter Two:
The Evolution of ‘Efficient’ Primary and Post-Primary Schooling, 1900-1914.
pp. 33 - 78.

Chapter Three:
pp. 79 - 123.

Chapter Four:
pp. 124 - 184.

Chapter Five - (Conclusion):
The Impact of Equality and Efficiency on the New Zealand Educational Scene.
pp. 185 - 197

Selected Bibliography: .......................................................... pp. 198 - 213.
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

FREDERICK WINSLOW TAYLOR: EDUCATIONAL MYTHS AND NEW ZEALAND'S EGALITARIAN CULTURE.

Background:

The school apart from life, apart from politics, is a lie, a hypocrisy. Bourgeois society indulged in this lie, covering up the fact that it was using the schools as a means of domination by declaring that the school was politically neutral, and in the service of all.¹

Between 1900 and 1945 the myth of equality of educational opportunity, as Beeby called it, was used to convince the New Zealand public that the way forward in education lay with greater 'social efficiency'. Imported largely from the United States and moulded to fit the New Zealand environment, this ideal quickly captured the imaginations of politicians and educational planners. The great attraction of 'social efficiency' was that it appeared to offer a solution to the problems associated with the accelerated nature of change in New Zealand society along 'scientific' lines. The ideal was founded upon the notion that "societies operate most effectively when individuals are properly allocated to the roles they perform in society".² The efficiency ideal was also synonymous with social harmony for it was thought that economic and social progress would only occur if New Zealanders became more efficient in employment in and outside of the home. Furthermore, by eliminating waste by a process of careful scientific management, fairness to all could be guaranteed because the talents of every individual would rationally be assessed and utilised for the benefit of the whole community.

Before elaborating upon this argument, it is essential that the reader understands not only what scientific management is and how this system affected people but also how it came to be so widely accepted in New Zealand. This introductory chapter examines these questions by outlining, albeit briefly, the principles and impact of scientific management in


an American setting; the structure of New Zealand’s national identity; and the concept of Beeby’s educational myths. It also presents the theoretical basis upon which this research rests and introduces the idea that it was New Zealand’s distinct and dynamic communal identity that made possible the full acceptance of the notion of efficiency which shaped the myth of equality of educational opportunity and so directly influenced the character of educational growth in the colony between the years 1900 to 1945.

AN AMERICAN IDEAL: FREDERICK WINSLOW TAYLOR AND THE EFFICIENCY OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

Frederick Winslow Taylor quickly became a central figure in America in 1911 when his newly-developed system of scientific management became inextricably linked to the drive for industrial efficiency. Scientific management aimed to optimise human output by objectively examining and redefining the processes of labour. Essentially “a technique for conserving energy and increasing productivity by the use of scientific methods at the individual workplace”, the system assumed that there was ‘one best method’ for doing each and every job and that this could quickly be ascertained by way of a scientific examination. Taylor believed that,

there is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest. And this one best method and best implement can only be discovered or developed through scientific study and analysis of all of the methods and implements in use, together with accurate, minute motion and time study.

In industry the detailed co-ordination, precision and planning of activities was to be determined by scientific analysis wherein the study of time and motion, and unnecessary movement and other wastage was eliminated from the production process. Techniques predicated upon this ‘science of efficiency’ - for example, the division of labour,


\[6\] Ibid., p. 25.
mechanisation and standardisation - were also employed to achieve the greatest productivity output possible in the 'best and fastest way'.

Taylor's management treatise was founded upon the explicit idea that:

If man's progress is slow, it is because of wastes - solely because of wastes - wastes of everything that is precious ...of time...of national resources... Wasted lives, sorrow instead of joy, painful, ignorant effort instead of glad, intelligent activity ... Elimination of all wastes may indeed be a Utopian ideal, not to be realised in the life of our planet, but any waste elimination brings its immediate... [socio-economic]... reward.

Taylor used the example of Schmidt, a pig-iron handler at the Bethlehem Steel works, to prove his point and so extol the virtues of scientific management in industry. He explained that by dividing Schmidt's job into set tasks, with set breaks and by forcing the pay rate up by a series of bonus plans, Schmidt's productivity output had increased almost fourfold! This astounding result was attributed to the simple application of scientific management to the pig-iron handler's job. This process had involved the careful scrutinisation of Schmidt's character and work in terms of speed and the fatigue he had experienced on the job. In this instance, scientific management had helped to eliminate waste in terms of human potential, time and materials. Because Taylor believed that Schmidt was a "dull fellow" suited only to manual labour, he needed to be properly placed in this job otherwise "he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type". Taylor made his position on this issue clearer still by reasoning that:

The man who is mentally alert and intelligent is for this very reason entirely unsuited to what would, for him, be the grinding monotony of work of this character. Therefore the workman who is best suited to handling pig iron is unable to understand the real science of doing this class of work. He is so

---

8 Ibid., p. 25.
9 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
10 Ibid., p. 38. Callahan wrote that Taylor considered it his duty to help Schmidt and other men like him improve themselves at work. According to Taylor, Schmidt was too dull to recognise, let alone make, the improvements himself and needed the guidance of "more thoughtful", better educated men, who would be able to provide the opportunity for self-improvement in the workplace.
stupid that the word "percentage" has no meaning to him, and he must consequently be trained by a man more intelligent than himself into the habit of working in accordance with the laws of science before he can be successful.\textsuperscript{12}

Schmidt became "the living embodiment of Taylor's ideal of the first-class man and the epitome of human efficiency"\textsuperscript{13} because he knew his place in the production process. Schmidt accepted that he should be left out of management decisions which could better be made by 'expert' overseers whose job it was to plan and promote efficiency outputs. Schmidt eagerly gave credence to a process which could give him "the help required to make him proficient a his present job ...[and also shift him]...to another class of work for which he is...[deemed to be]...either mentally or physically better suited."\textsuperscript{14} Schmidt's accepting stance led him to believe (as Taylor had advocated) that the interests of all employers and employees were identical in that each sought 'maximum prosperity'. Taylor claimed that since both parties shared this common goal, each group would be content working hard to achieve the promotion of high wages with the guarantee of low labour costs.\textsuperscript{15} It was this happy agreement which was essential to the workability of the scientific process for it forged "close, intimate...[and]...personal cooperation between the management and the men"\textsuperscript{16} and thereby promoted efficiency. Moreover, less waste and more progress was achievable by accepting ones' own role and responsibility within the workplace as much of the potential for conflict - for example, infighting and soldiering - was eliminated:

The natural laziness of men is serious, but by far the greatest evil from which both workers and employers are suffering is the systematic soldiering which is almost universal under all of the ordinary scheme of management and which results from a careful study on the part of the workman of what will promote their best interests.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp. 20-21. Soldiering is defined by Taylor as "the deliberate slowing down of production while, at the same time, giving the appearance of working at full speed. One of the reasons for this type of soldiering...was the mistaken idea workmen had that an increase in their output would result in unemployment, both for themselves and other workmen." 
\end{itemize}
Applied to industry then, scientific management meant that individual employees who at one time were responsible for the manufacture of the whole product now were ordered to become proficient in, and accountable for, only one part of the entire production process. Under the banner of efficiency, scientific studies removed the control and the decision making processes from the shop floor and placed these in the hands of a new type of manager, known as the 'expert'. Subordinate to the guidance of 'experts', workers had their positions redefined by a process which guaranteed that by eliminating waste, production would be increased, prices lowered and wages raised simultaneously. Employer, employee and the wider community were all to benefit from the economic effects of scientific management in industry principally because it was a means of enabling all involved to attain better financial and social security.

For this reason the system was also thought to enhance social stability because, according to Callahan, “We couldn’t ask more from a patriotic motive, than Scientific Management gives from a selfish one”. For this reason the system was also thought to enhance social stability because, according to Callahan, “We couldn’t ask more from a patriotic motive, than Scientific Management gives from a selfish one”.  

By the early 1920s, Taylor had become “the prophet of a new order” in American society through the application of the principles of scientific management. Such an approach appeared to offer the

---


20 R.E. Callahan, Education And The Cult Of Efficiency, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 20. “Theodore Roosevelt saw in this...a great patriotic contribution even though its motivating force was economic self-interest.”

panacea for the economic ills that beset America. Here was a means whereby production could be increased, wages raised, and prices lowered. Here was American mechanical genius at its best, solving the problem of competition with Germany, the high cost of living, and the conservation of national resources at one blow.  

The reorganisation of every aspect of the nation's life according to some clearly formulated plan seemed to provide the long awaited solution because it offered a clear hope and the chance to reform a society which, suffering from the consequences of rapid industrialisation, was plagued with a multitude of problems. Rapid urban expansion, increased immigration, the exploitation of national resources, the consolidation of large businesses as well as a growing impatience with what was considered to be a corrupt and often incompetent government, bolstered the already considerable appeal of scientific management.  

A heightened fear among the middle-classes regarding lax social order served only to add further weight to this strong climate of opinion. Even the most complacent were "prodded into discontent" in the belief that

the very survival of democratic institutions...[depended]...on a lifting of productivity to new degrees of adequacy which...[would]...rapidly eliminate starvation, establish a feeling of a greater economic security, and destroy impulses to follow false leaders along paths of violence toward a totalitarian world.  

Businesses, large and small, began to employ 'experts' to assess the working potential of equipment and of human resources. In developing better methods to eliminate waste, experts followed these basic rules:

Science, not rule of thumb. Harmony, not discord. Cooperation, not individualism. Maximum output, in place of restricted output...[and]... The development of each man to his greatest efficiency and prosperity.  

---


23 Ibid., p. 3.

24 Ibid., p. 4.


26 Ibid., p. 140.
Variables such as labour turnover, recruitment and promotion rates, and planning and costing systems also were analysed to enhance output\(^\text{27}\) and within a short time, rapid financial returns (gains) for employers and their employees followed and attested to the remarkable benefits of applied scientific management in American industry.

Many fantastic and well-publicised results in industrial output spawned another incredible trend. During 1911, the drive for national efficiency in America became so popular that newspapers and journals ran columns and articles quizzing readers on matters such as: “Does your home pay? Does it make a fair return on the investment of time and strength and money that is put into it? As a factory for the production of citizenship is it a success?”\(^\text{28}\)

Soon the churches stepped onto the ‘efficiency bandwagon’, calling for better administration and planning: “We have too long regarded the church as capable of performing its possible services to the community without the most elementary means of administration.”\(^\text{29}\) Media frenzy over the potential gains for institutions if scientific management was applied boosted the attractiveness of Taylor’s system amongst many different groups of individuals because efficiency, in the public’s mind, came to be synonymous with progress and reform. Predictably, it was not long before the idea of eliminating waste in order to improve efficiency was deemed equally applicable to all other social activities, including the management of our homes, the management of our farms; the management of the business of our tradesman, large and small; of our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities, and our governmental departments.\(^\text{30}\)


\[^\text{29}\] Ibid., p. 45.

By the end of 1911, the American public were saturated with the call for national efficiency and many were now enjoying the financial benefits of scientific management in action.

That said, however, Taylor's programme was not without its critics for as Callahan remarked, some people were incensed at incidents where, in the name of scientific management, servants were prevented “from enjoying the aesthetic experience of gazing out of the window for 102 seconds”. These people, mostly from an academic background, were concerned that (public) deference to scientific expertise in the quest for efficiency had gone too far. These academics demanded greater individual freedom from this inhumane (but revolutionary) management system and, in keeping with their view of democracy, began to ask the “troubled question...Who of us is safe”?

However, the socio-political acceptability of increased efficiency far outweighed any of the questions raised by critics regarding these so-called alarming developments. Instead, in the flood of enthusiasm, an attempt was made to apply the principles of scientific management to many aspects of American life, including the army and navy, the legal profession, the home, the family, the household, the church and last but not least, to education.

Indeed external as well as internal developments calling for the elimination of economic waste added to the public’s readiness to accept the efficiency doctrine. Japan’s victory over Russia (1904-1905) appeared to be a “vindication of organisation, dedicated patriotism and

---


32 Ibid., pp. 44-45.

33 Ibid., p. 45.

34 Ibid., pp. 46-47. “the total impact of scientific management...[can be seen by the stress placed on]...the more general notion of efficiency...as Theodore Roosevelt...[made clear]...in an address to students which received attention in the popular press...You must be efficient, you must be able to hold your own in the world of politics, the world of business, able to keep your own head above water, to make your work satisfactory, to make it pay. If you do not, you cannot do good to others. You must be efficient. You must never forget for a moment that, so far from being a base theory, it is a vital doctrine, a doctrine vital to good in this country”.

scientific method in the supreme test of war". And this, coupled with the phenomenal progress made by the German economy when scientific methods had recently been applied, created a sense of social introspection, further confirming Taylor’s treatise and the drive for national efficiency:

The people have changed but not the system; it has grown antiquated and will not meet our present needs; it has indeed become a positive detriment and is producing a type of character which is not fit to meet virtuously the temptations and exigencies of modern life. The crime which stalks almost unblushingly through our land; the want of responsibility which defames our social honor; the appalling frequency of divorce; the utter lack of self-control; the abundant use of illicit means to gain political positions; are all traceable to its one great and crying defeat - inefficiency.

No social institution was exempt from this kind of criticism. This was especially true of those (institutions) “large enough to be suspected of gross managerial inefficiency and those supported by public taxation”. Schools, in particular, were subjected to a barrage of complaints regarding their inability to eliminate waste with critics suggesting that “there is inefficiency in the business management of many schools such as would not be tolerated in the world of offices and shops”. Articles entitled “The Danger of Running a Fool Factory”, for example, widely attested to the view that America schooling was “permeated with errors and hypocrisy” and in dire need of reform.

In this climate of ‘efficiency hysteria’, the urgent application of scientific management to the educational arena was demanded by many people. Individuals now formally recognised that the school system penalised over ninety per cent of its students by

---

37 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 47.
40 Ibid., p. 50.
41 Ibid., p. 51.
releasing them into the world of work “unfitted for even the simplest tasks in life”. Linked as it was to social progress, the efficiency bandwagon made it socially acceptable to blame the academic nature of schooling for creating inefficient individuals and failed families. Because the educational experiences of pupils did not mirror those in real life, students not suited to academic studies left school and made “so little money that...[often they were]...driven into the saloons from discouragement, and...into the brothels to save themselves from starvation.” Boris Sidis, a commentator from Harvard University, summed up the problem thus:

We desiccate, sterilize, petrify and embalm our youth. Our children learn by rote and are guided by routine. The present school system squanders the resources of the country and wastes the energy and the lives of our children. The school system should be abolished. Our educators are narrow-minded pedants, occupied with the dry bones of textbooks and the sawdust of pedagogics, who are ignorant of the real, vital problems of human interest.

Accordingly, it was thought that the whole social system would benefit enormously if only education was re-cast along efficiency lines. Better management of education resources would involve a reassessment of a school’s aims, organisation, equipment and management systems so that the educational experiences of pupils would be brought closer to ‘real life experiences’. The curriculum, teaching and assessment practices would also be reformed to eliminate human waste and in doing so, promote social stability.

In the American educational context, social efficiency was interpreted to mean that individuals should be schooled according to their abilities, aptitudes and future life potential(s) with these factors ascertained by a scientific sorting process, wherein education according to need was deemed to eliminate waste in a just and fair manner. Kliebard summed up the position thus:

Work up the raw material into that finished product for which it is best adapted. Applied to education this means: Educate the individual

---

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., p. 56.
according to his … [/her] … capabilities. This requires that the materials of the curriculum be sufficiently various to meet the needs of every class of individuals in the community; and that the course of training and study be sufficiently flexible that the individual can be given just the things that he…[/she]…needs… People, after all, should not be taught what they will never use. That was a waste. In order to reduce waste, educators had to institute a process of scientific measurement leading to a prediction as to one’s future role in life.46

Efficiency in education seemed to promise democracy in education. Formal, academic schooling, while not a free commodity, was altered now to include “a curriculum attuned to the needs of a new population and a new industrial order”.47 The modified curriculum was to cater for the needs of those less academically able individuals who were eager to advance their learning in non-academic subjects. This curriculum expansion worked to offer students greater educational choice and was therefore judged to be democratically sound.48 Furthermore, the application of the principles of scientific management allowed the schools to act fairly as the “sifting agent in the…[development and]…deployment of talent and ability”.49 Educational efficiency enabled school teachers to assess objectively the academic potentials of every pupil (regardless of their background) because it endorsed the use of so-called impartial intelligence testing and ‘streaming’ practices which helped encourage every student (whatever their ability) to realise his/her innate potential. Indeed, as McKenzie has noted, an “added bonus…[of the system was also]…that the results from one school could be compared with another and rankings of respective school efficiency established”.50 This efficient, meritocratic education system thus represented democracy at its finest as the supposedly objective appraisal and placement of students into different courses, according to their ability and effort, was regarded as being both fair and just.51


47 Ibid., p. 103.

48 Ibid., pp. 103-104.


However, as Callahan has noted, the expansion of educational (and other social) services along efficiency lines in America appeared to mirror the British experience, where ‘the attempt to raise the well-being and efficiency of the more backward of the people was not philanthropy but, business’. This begs the question, was the same true of the New Zealand experience? What factors motivated the growth of schooling in New Zealand? Did this expansion, shaped as it was to reward bright, hard-working individuals, really provide equality of educational opportunity? And if not, why did a supposedly egalitarian public believe in and so support the validity of the unequal placement of individuals in different types of educational courses? It is to these key questions that this paper will now turn, pausing briefly to examine the development of New Zealand’s unique socio-historical identity, a fundamental component in this efficiency - equality equation.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISTINCT NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL IDENTITY

To better illustrate the idea that the notion of efficiency shaped the myth of equality of educational opportunity and thus directly influenced the character of educational growth in New Zealand, one must first examine some of the major developments which forged a distinctive national identity and made possible the acceptance of the equality ideal. This section will outline significant social, economic and political changes which affected New Zealand’s development prior to 1900 and explain the emergence of colonial egalitarianism and, consequentially, the acceptance of the equality myth in education.

Belief in the superiority of the British people and development of myths about the selection of the original immigrant stock provided most European New Zealanders with a collective identity, a broad definition of themselves and their place in the world.53

Schooling between 1900 and 1945 was shaped by the development of New Zealand’s unique cultural identity. Forged under the umbrella of European ethnocentricity, many immigrants to New Zealand before 1900 abhorred the classist systems of their homeland(s) and attached great importance to the ethic of hard work and the idea of


'getting on'⁵⁴ According to Sutch, two distinct waves of immigrants shaped the egalitarian character of this dynamic colonial culture. He wrote:

Much of New Zealand’s condition was...caused by immigration. While the earlier immigrants, who were predominantly from the wage-earning class, brought the egalitarianism of the non-conformist church, the Chartist ideas, the eight-hour day, the friendly societies, and a few radical thinkers, the more numerous and later newcomers were rather people accustomed to poverty, unemployment, inadequate schooling, poor relief, class stratification, and lower middle class aspirations - people who were not and could not be the same kind of New Zealanders as those who had been there in the 'eighties. Without them New Zealand could not have developed, but with them, its progressive movements were diluted; to many, the labour legislation, the old-age pension, the opportunity for a farm, a shop, or a house with a piece of land round it put New Zealand in advance of the land they called Home.⁵⁵

Memories of overcrowded, unsanitary conditions and the rampant spread of disease and crime in their British homelands seemed to make bearable the unfamiliar and often harsh surrounds of many of New Zealand’s earliest settlements.⁵⁶ The adverse conditions suffered by colonists bred a conscious egalitarian spirit in people who had once been aggrieved by the old, unjust practices of British law and society. On this point Gibbons wrote:

Plucked from their dynamic original social context, many of these British social attitudes and cultural values atrophied in a colonial framework where the social and cultural challenges which caused change in the parent society were absent. But colonial culture was free from certain constraints that operated in the older society... What had been brought to New Zealand was not the full range but a selection of British social attitudes and cultural values; notably absent, or present only in attenuated forms, were aristocratic... ideas.⁵⁷


So strong was the nature of this egalitarian identity in New Zealand by the turn of the century that it caused the writer Constantine Dillon to complain that ‘This is a glorious country for a labouring man!!! No starvation, no fear, no poor law union, high wages, short hours, infinite grazing for cows’.\textsuperscript{58} This climate proved shocking to those from the old country like Dillon, as even the majority of working-class people in New Zealand seemed not to fear those in the higher social and financial echelons. The belief that ‘one person was as good as another’ in this ‘backwater colony’ meant that all seemed freely able to ‘assume the titles and manners of their betters’.\textsuperscript{59} Between 1900 and 1945 in New Zealand this came to increasingly be true as attempts to modernise social and economic growth in a ‘small democracy’ meant more and more that elitism and privilege had no place. This social and economic ideal rested upon the simple philosophy - that New Zealand’s “economic prosperity must rest upon and promote human welfare”\textsuperscript{60}

However, while rejecting the structural classism of their homelands the settlers, still bound by their socio-economic backgrounds, assigned the (new) colony many traditional British mores. The emphasis upon the ‘ethic of work’, for example, was an important piece of British culture which helped shaped New Zealand’s developing national identity. The importance many ascribed to this ethic was such that it became extolled in the New Zealand parliamentary debates as a cultural virtue: “Nations do not live by militarism, but by work, and it is the advantage of work, and the duty of work, and the nobility of work that we ought to impress upon the minds of the rising generation”.\textsuperscript{61}

The message of national identity which was to be passed on to later generations was clear: hard work and effort could conquer any environmental adversity. The meritocratic ideal that effort and ability could ‘make anyone good’ in this colonial environment, was quickly established.\textsuperscript{62} Furthermore, the development of laissez-faire economics which


\textsuperscript{61} New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (Hereafter NZPD) 1901, Vol. 116, p. 294.

\textsuperscript{62} C. Vellekoop, ‘Streaming And Social Class’, Delta, Vol. 5. (August, 1968): 12. According to Vellekoop, New Zealand’s strong egalitarian tendencies meant that “the social class destination of a young person... [was seen to be]... determined entirely by his abilities and motivation”. 
attacked the ‘work-shy’ by placing even more emphasis upon the responsibility of individuals within their respective communities, also bolstered this ethic and further illustrated that while colonists had a “strong sense of loyalty to Britain and an awareness of their British roots... [which]...were very much part of the non-Maori New Zealander...at the same time there was a growing awareness that the...[New Zealand]...environment was very different from that of their parent society”.64

The key to a better life was not only evident in this tradition but was also to be found in the religiosity of many of the new settlers. Christian Churches further legitimated this egalitarian belief by emphasising the importance of charity towards others and of a hard and honest days work for a fair reward. Even the colonial “atheists and agnostics” could not ignore the welfaristic function of the church which made popular the egalitarian quest for social betterment:

Christian faith and practice played a fundamental role in the shaping of colonial society...Charity may have been dispensed according to the degrading notion of the ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ poor, but it was the churches and their congregations who helped the needy in nineteenth-century New Zealand...And pervasive in colonial society was the sense that faith was to be expressed more in deeds than in words - as the ready cooperation between pioneer settlers...[for the benefit of society]...could so often testify.66

So strong was the emerging national identity that ‘real discrepancies’ in the socio-economic standings and status of various individuals were ‘rationalised away’ by people’s belief and faith in the egalitarian nature of the social system.67 Bedggood further explores this argument by suggesting that this actually prevented in New Zealand

66 Ibid., pp. 128-129.
The emergence of a proletarian consciousness through the control of motives and expectations in the cultural system. Real inequalities, or discrimination in the opportunity structure...[were]...then perceived as either evidence of personal failings or the fault of some 'scapegoat' group.68

Thus Bedggood suggests, working-class people (including Maori) who believed in the egalitarian ideal were "integrated into the national community by a combination of fragmentation, force and fraud".69 Their faith in this system worked to legitimate their own unequal position. On this point, Olssen argues that "even if working-class sub-cultures existed they also belonged to a wider moral community and were affected by urbanisation...and the rapid growth in the popularity of scientific modes of thought".70

By 1899 this had come to increasingly be true as many social, economic and political changes had worked to reflect and also heighten the social faith in this egalitarian ideal. The emergence of the welfare state was but one of these changes. Welfaristic measures, fashioned as they were in response to a myriad of perceived social problems, had the effect of intensifying beliefs about New Zealand's cultural identity. For example, the development of a pension system for the elderly (and later widows) illustrated not only the changing role of government but also the popular sanctioning of new humane social priorities. By endorsing the pension system the government accepted responsibility for elderly New Zealand citizens who had already made an effective contribution to New Zealand society and indicated that the State was now prepared to act as guardian of the people.71

However, it is important to note that assuming financial responsibility for the aged was not a universal measure. The employment of means testing and the Eurocentric view

---

69 Ibid., p. 127.
toward Maori meant that many elderly people still did not receive a State pension. As Oliver suggested, the efficient use of government resources was a paramount consideration in the development of this welfare system wherein “old age pensions were meant to be cheap, and ... efforts were made to keep them cheap.”

Nonetheless the old age pension scheme, coupled with other social legislation, illustrated the introduction of public welfare for those society deemed as ‘deserving’. This measure, so central to the development of the welfare state, was seen as progressive because it was aligned with work-ethic type principles and appeared to counter and neutralise social problems, thereby adding resistance to the fight against national decay and cultural ruination. It also illustrated the strength of New Zealand’s developing (national) identity for as Condliffe noted, the principle of national betterment “once admitted, was capable of more generous and wider application”.

The birth and gradual development of the welfare state was also shaped in part by the feminine influence upon New Zealand society. Granting Women’s Suffrage in 1893 did not result in “domestic discord, children forgotten, husbands uncared for, dress and appearance neglected, divided skirts, smoking cigarettes, scorn of marriage... [and] ... a general unsexing of women”. Instead, an awareness of female concerns in the political arena made possible the greater extension of welfaristic measures. Politicians, aiming to capture the female vote, sought to emphasise the importance of the New Zealand family unit with the result that the social view of women as agents of civilisation and morality affirmed traditional family values and caused renewed parliamentary attacks upon vices such as alcoholism, prostitution, and wife desertion. As Olssen has suggested,

---

72 W.H. Oliver, “The Origins and Growth of the Welfare State”, Social Welfare And New Zealand Society, A.D. Trlhin, ed., (Wellington, Methuen, 1977): 5, 11. The old-age pension scheme was not a universal one. Eligibility for a pension was determined by an income test with the idea being that - “If an old age pension scheme is to be successfully carried out sentiment must not be allowed to play any part in it”.

73 Ibid., p. 11.


75 Ibid., p. 284.

[e]xtending the vote to women in New Zealand gave greater emphasis to the role of wife and mother. It also gave more strength to their championing the cause of the old, the sick, the destitute, the defective and those in prison.⁷⁷

The issue of child labour was also debated by women and politicians in the 1890s. The issues surrounding child labour, while hugely controversial, served to reflect wider public interest in working conditions. However, as Brooking has suggested, other national and international events also worked to increase the complexity of the child labour issue:

The prevailing climate of opinion was receptive to the call for reform of working conditions. The severe depression of the late 1880s created a climate in which moral panics and crusades flourished. Constant reference was made in newspapers and at public meetings to such related problems as drunkenness, larrikinism (juvenile delinquency), smoking and prostitution, as well as to the abuse of female and child labour...[sweating]...New Zealanders were also growing alarmed at the incidence of disease and insanity in their new Eden.⁷⁸

Primarily, debate focused on the impact that industrialisation (in the cities and on the farms) had had upon the sources and conditions of child labour. At one time working on the land had been a ‘central and intimate’ part of the lives of well over fifty per cent of New Zealanders, including children who usually were expected to contribute their labour as part of the family economy.⁷⁹ But industrialisation, combined with farm mechanisation and the decline in employment opportunities in the farming sector prompted a mass (and in New Zealand an unprecedented) population shift from rural to urban areas. Predictably, the cities and factories boomed, putting strain on the availability of living and working space and stretching those voluntary social services established to help the needy, ‘deserving poor’. Taking up this point, Olssen has observed that:

The most striking demographic change during the period was urbanization. Growing towns and cities presented New Zealand society with problems

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 379.
that required planning and expertise for their solution. A new generation of technocrats, imbued with a faith that science and rationality would solve society's problems, became influential in administration at the national level and in most urban areas. The people themselves now formed organizations to achieve their goals: voluntary services and structured activities began to replace the informal and spontaneous interactions of nineteenth-century New Zealand.\(^8^0\)

Responding to this huge urban expansion, several concerned groups (including the suffragettes) raised a variety of problems - perceived and real - which worked to question social stability and indeed, the effectiveness of governmental social control. Delinquency, sweating, juvenile crime, recidivism and truancy (from the primary schools) were seen as especially damaging to the nation and issues that the public deemed problematic and deserving government remedy. Moreover, as Shuker noted, youth issues were particularly important because:

> the State...[had not only come]...to regard the physical and moral growth of the nation's children and youth as an important national resource to be preserved ...[but also held]...a moral concern to protect the community from those elements labelled as irresponsible.\(^8^1\)

Accordingly, social responses to massive change thus reflected the strength and indeed the character of New Zealand's developing Eurocentric national identity. In terms of child labour, this was done by introducing the Factories Act (1891) which theoretically banned the employment in factories of all children under the age of thirteen. In 1894, this Act was further revised to include the provision that all children under the age of sixteen had to be certified with a pass in Standard Four before they could legally pursue paid factory work.\(^8^2\)

Regulating the activities of youth so that city children were compelled to attend school or be financially penalised exemplified the government's concern to counter and neutralise the problem of urban delinquency. Education was, in this instance, an instrument of social

---


control designed to serve two purposes: it educated youth theoretically providing all enrolled with opportunities other than those supplied by the criminal route at the same time as keeping potential troublemakers off the streets and out of trouble. Utilising this new legislation, the State now defined a 'worker' as being:

any person of any age or of either sex employed as aforesaid to perform any species of skilled or unskilled manual labour for any employer, or in or about any gold-mining claim, or any coal mine, or any factory registered under 'The Factories Act, 1894'.

It is important also to note however, that the timing of this factory legislation is significant. It was against the backdrop of the 1880s depression, when jobs were needed in the towns by grown men, that the government compelled city businesses not to hire minors, whose cheap labour had been exploited for years. Evidently then, this legislation was not born out of any altruistic concern for the arduous employment conditions that some city children had to endure in sweated labour but rather from the circumstances of the day that led to concern over urban social control and demanded state intervention. This is abundantly clear when one considers that it was not until 1891 that the State began to overwrite the value of cheap child labour.

Shuker extends this analysis. He has argued that child labour legislation, while seemingly pandering to the feminine influence which sought to protect the young, also reflected

the moral panic over larrikinism...[which]...was an attempt on the part of the emergent middle class to establish their ethic of respectability as the norm. This attempt was successfully undertaken through middle class dominance of a state which was increasingly intervening in the regulation of social life.

The shape of this labour legislation substantiates the point that there was "little appreciation of the deeper causes of the problem: the colonial environment, poverty, and the importance

----

of child labour"\textsuperscript{85} for the sustenance of families because perceived social problems like larrikinism were attributed to failed discipline techniques within the (working-class) family system.

Moreover, only children who worked in the towns were affected by these laws. Had the government been genuinely concerned with the demanding conditions under which many children laboured, they would have attempted to implement and apply this law nationwide, thus preventing all children from working for money, compelling them to go to school instead. This point is particularly striking when it is observed that in the Waikato region in the mid-1890s, a ‘leading Liberal’ acknowledged that “Dairy farmers…were forced by the economic system to depend on their children, who…[were]…being worked to death”\textsuperscript{86} However, when placed within an historical context, the failure of this legislation to include rural children’s work is perhaps understandable: rural politicians represented those whose labour was the backbone of the New Zealand economy and as a result held much political clout in the House. Accordingly, these politicians were bound to oppose anything that might impinge on the workings of country farmers and the economy - for example, the criminalisation of child labour - especially when they were constrained by an economic system that had traditionally relied on child labour and which legitimated a cultural ideology that ‘good hard work maketh the child (into) a capable [wo]man’.

National responses to perceived problems and labour issues reflects the way in which social conditions helped forge a distinct New Zealand identity. The development of this identity was shaped by the unique responses of European colonists with vastly different experiences and expectations to the environmental conditions of this new nation. The communal emphasis on the virtues of hard work for individual and social betterment and the people’s faith in the systematic success of an egalitarian ideal made this backwater colony seem ‘a ideal working man’s land’. Whilst the appeal from those in the emergent middle-classes who were attempting to create Nirvana - a ‘new Eden’ where State control of, and protection from the working-class and Maori masses was inclusively provided - was indeed influential in forming an egalitarian New Zealand identity.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 129.

In summary then, in order to convince the people of the need for improved efficiency, it was necessary to gain support from the general populace whose egalitarian values attached great importance to hard work and who were deeply suspicious of any idea that might promote the emergence of a European-style class system in New Zealand which would unfairly favour the rich. The general structure of New Zealand’s national egalitarian identity had to be encompassed within an acceptable colonial ideology: convincing the public of the benefits of social efficiency necessarily meant embracing this colonial egalitarianism. The myth of ‘equality of educational opportunity’ provided the vehicle to promote such a view. Changing to meet the social conditions and expectations of the day, the equality myth easily accommodated the dynamic principles of social efficiency which in educational terms meant “[t]he right selection of subjects along with the right way of teaching them could develop citizens of all classes endowed in accordance with the humanist ideal - with the power of reason... and high moral character.”

To understand why equality of educational opportunity became the perfect selling pitch, it is necessary to explain how this ideal was structured and how it came to motivate the expansion of New Zealand’s education system. Beeby’s theoretical conception of educational myths provides us with a useful tool with which to examine these questions.


Under the guise of equality of educational opportunity, efficient schooling was represented to the New Zealand populace as merely being an expansion of educational opportunities for those society deemed most able to benefit from further instruction. Beeby’s theory of educational myths helps to clarify the point that equality of educational opportunity was indeed a myth: an ideal instrument by which the structural inequalities in New Zealand’s education system were both legitimated and validated. Out of necessity then, one must first focus upon Beeby’s concept educational myths. He wrote:


An educational myth is, for me, a form of communication; spoken or assumed, between contemporaries or between generations. It's a communication that can't be taken quite literally. It gets public credence and support from its capacity to express, in relatively simple terms, relationships between ideas and events that aren't completely understood and whose outcomes can't fully be foreseen. Within limitations it can be interpreted in different ways by different people; it leaves some place for the element of the irrational that underlies most human activities, and it gives a sense of direction rather than absolute goals.90

In this, Beeby identified the five essential elements of an educational myth. The conditions were these: first, that the myth be deeply seated within and so represent the aspirations of the community; second, that the language representative of the myth be 'flexible', allowing for an interpretational scope which is both wide and diverse; third, that in doing so the myth bestows upon educators and administrators 'a broad sense of direction', rather than one which is absolute and at the same time provides guidance which is realistic and operative; fourth that it symbolises an ideal which is, at present, unattainable; and, finally, that it is an entity which all people can relate to, believe in and support, an aspiration and a hope which people will fight for. An educational myth was therefore a representative social construct, a dynamic entity, which served a myriad of oft changing purposes for a variety of people, over time. Perhaps its greatest significance was that it gave people an educational ideal to aspire to, where individuals and groups who otherwise were in conflict were unified by a common objective.91 Accordingly, a myth served not only to accommodate and validate changes in the education system but also the education system as a whole.

Yet a myth which represented a common goal could only be interpreted so far before it became an outdated ideal. Over time, by changing school practices and regulations in an attempt to realise this mythical goal and with the introduction of new social and/or educational theories, the problems associated with it became clearer and its practical weaknesses more discernible, which in turn led the myth to be exposed as an impotent


rational upon which to model the education system.\textsuperscript{92} Beeby’s symbolic conception of ‘rival myths’ highlights this point, “a myth rarely dies a sudden death. Even when two myths are in partial conflict, the old myth, like many ancient faiths, is quietly absorbed into the new with a fresh interpretation of terms”.\textsuperscript{93}

According to Beeby, two myths, one well-established, the other new, could co-exist together, the younger coming of age when the elder seemed no longer to be believable and incapable of fully legitimating new educational objectives. The rival myth would then rise to the fore by questioning the validity of the old myth and aligning itself with those dynamic social attitudes which represented and endorsed new and credible socio-educational practices.\textsuperscript{94} The claim that a succession of four educational myths - that is - the ‘survival of the fittest’, the ‘whole child’, ‘equality of educational opportunity’, and the ‘equity’ ideal - have overlapped, influenced and directed the development of New Zealand’s education system would seem to encapsulate Beeby’s thesis.

\textbf{SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST}

Beeby claimed that from 1877 through to the mid-1920s, schooling in New Zealand was dominated by the ‘survival of the fittest’ myth.\textsuperscript{95} This myth appealed to the climate of the times by emphasising that schooling was a politically neutral institution that allowed for the fair contest between intellectual talent.\textsuperscript{96} This belief fitted easily with the egalitarian ethos of many new settlers because it supported the idea that regardless of socio-economic background, hard-working children who possessed academic ability could achieve a high degree of educational attainment within the school system.\textsuperscript{97} The prevalence of this myth

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., pp. xiv-xv, xvii.
\item\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p. xvi.
\item\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.
\item\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., p. xix.
\item\textsuperscript{96} A. Jones et al., Myths and Realities: Schooling in New Zealand, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, p. 29.
\end{itemize}
was evident in the importance placed upon formal school examinations such as the Standards, Junior Civil Service, Proficiency and Matriculation Examinations. By 1915, however, socio-economic and political upheaval in New Zealand brought about a challenge to the ‘survival of the fittest’ myth. Within the context of steadily rising school enrolments and retention rates both in the primary and post-primary sectors, New Zealanders, affected as they were by depression (1880s), war and the modification of child labour laws, began to question the importance attached to academic curriculum. This, coupled with the influx of new, more liberal ideas from overseas added weight to this climate of opinion and gave rise to a new myth - that of educating the ‘whole child’.99

THE WHOLE CHILD

The myth of educating the ‘whole child’ was an immediate social response to criticism surrounding the educational practices once endorsed by the ‘survival of the fittest’ myth. The ‘whole child’ myth re-oriented the school system such that every child was deemed to possess some socially valued ability, worthy of further development.100 Valuing only the so-called academically bright child and focusing only on their educational needs was now seen to be an outdated practice. From this point on, the needs of all individual children were to be recognised by offering a curriculum intended to cater for a wide variety of aptitudes, abilities, interests and skills where the intended aim of creating a well-rounded, patriotic citizen was made very clear. The ‘whole child’ myth coincided with the liberal ethos of the day. Emphasising the value of every individual learner, and making education more ‘relevant’ and thus ‘valuable’ to all who attended, served not only as a recognition of past alienation and the grievances of many groups of children within the


100 Ibid.
school system but also as a potential solution to this long-standing problem. This changing philosophy was evident especially at the primary level where school councils, therapists, remedial classes and speech clinics for ‘backward’ children, transition classes, aimed at bridging the gap between the life of school and work, and more classes and schools for the intellectually and physically challenged were introduced. Curriculum innovations and introductions in such areas as craft, music, Maori culture and citizenship also mirrored the response of this new and rival myth. These developments, among others, reflected a new climate within the school system which (in theory) aimed to bestow upon both teachers and pupils a ‘new freedom’ wherein teaching methods could be adapted to match the diversity of students abilities and skills.

However the huge emphasis on formal examinations tended to limit the appeal of the ‘whole child’ myth in the post-primary arena. Even the establishment of Technical Schools (in 1908) - designed to cater for those ‘not suited’ to academic study - and the expansion of the District High School syllabus - intended to direct rural students into an agricultural type of post-primary schooling experience - failed to make much of an impact upon ambitious students. These pupils wanted formal academic examination qualifications and would not accept a curricula that excluded them from academic tests and the opportunity to acquire social status and mobility. In an era of credential inflation, this tendency, along with the rising growth in the post-primary school roll and retention rate created an environment conducive to the entrance of another new and rival myth - that of ‘equality of educational opportunity’.

---


EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Predicated upon the notion that

every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his powers,¹⁰⁶

the myth of ‘equality of educational opportunity’ was seen to represent the ideals of fairness and equity. Equality of opportunity subtly implied that equal access to the same school curriculum on a meritocratic basis, would produce something like equality of results.¹⁰⁷ New Zealanders rallied hard behind this myth as their harsh, unforgettable depression experience coupled with social anxiety over the onset of World War Two, had served to create a new, introspective public vision.¹⁰⁸ A more democratic school system which would give equal access to a variety of educational opportunities “under conditions which provided a fair field and no favour”¹⁰⁹ was now demanded by the public. The call for ‘equality of educational opportunity’ also reflected the adverse reaction to the old ‘survival of the fittest’ myth for it demonstrated the general enmity of the social collective against the exclusion of some pupils from those valuable curriculum subjects and the chance to compete for the same vocational opportunities of their more fortunate peers.¹¹⁰ Consequently, changes in the education system such as the abolition of the Proficiency Examination (1937), the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen years (1944), and the establishment of a common core curriculum (post 1945) all marked the hegemonic endorsement of the myth of ‘equality of educational opportunity’.¹¹¹


¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 18.
In time, however, discrepancies between the educational achievements of working class, Maori and women, relative to those upper-class Pakeha males, revealed that schooling did not equalise opportunities but in fact reproduced inequalities.\textsuperscript{112} Formal educational institutions did not seek to make persons of like ability equal; rather, they attempted to bestow upon individuals “an equal opportunity to compete for unequal rewards in a capitalist society”.\textsuperscript{113} The sociologist Roy Nash summed up the position, thus:

\begin{quote}
the phrase ‘of a kind for which he is best fitted’ was made in the context of a non-selective education system...the implications...[being]...that the schools would provide different kinds of education for different kinds of children is clear.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

**EQUITY**

The genesis of a new myth, that of ‘equity’, stemmed from criticism surrounding this inglorious ideal. Equality of educational opportunity was indeed a myth because the institution of the school represented and favoured the hegemonic (dominant/powerful) societal group - that is, middle to upper-class Pakeha males - to the obvious detriment of all other groups.\textsuperscript{115} Results from formal school examinations as well as those from intelligent tests were cited as proof that real educational opportunities were unfairly being accorded to different sectors of the community.\textsuperscript{116} This argument was often bolstered by the use of statistics which showed conclusively that women and individuals affiliated with minority groups were in low paid, low status employment positions relative to most males. These results, it was suggested, were in part attributable to the high correlation between bias


\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 55.


\textsuperscript{115} C.E. Hurst, *The Anatomy of Social Inequality*, St Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1979, pp. 189-190. Hurst observes that the power and rights of those in the hegemonic group are mediated through and legitimated by the State: “The state, of course, is the ultimate arbitrator and represents the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests.”

schooling and unequal employment prospects. Equity proponents thus claimed that the creation of a just and democratic society would only result from treating unequal students differently. They reasoned that because schools were not neutral institutions but rather agents of control working for the hegemony, some students whose cultural and class backgrounds were not aligned with the valued cultural capital of the school system, were at a decided disadvantage in their quest for educational attainment and credentials.  

In New Zealand today, economic uncertainty, coupled with credential inflation makes the equity myth highly acceptable as it presses the cause of the disadvantaged in an environment geared up to embrace and define most people as such under the well-worn banner of political correctness. Popular as it is, it is probable that the ‘equity’ ideal will in turn be challenged by a new and rival myth at some stage.  

Given the historical context of New Zealand’s school system, as well as the dynamic interplay of socio-educative mythologies, it appears almost certain, as Beeby predicted, that we will be called upon to rethink some of our future educational assumptions.

THE EQUALITY MYTH AS AN ANALYTICAL TOOL

Beeby’s conception of educational myths serves as a useful analytical tool when returning to assess the topic at hand that under the guise of equality of educational opportunity, efficiency in schooling was presented to the general populace as merely being an expansion of educational opportunities for those deemed most able to benefit from further instruction. By re-working Beeby’s thesis, it will be shown that equality of educational opportunity not only served as a credible myth from 1900 to 1945, but also that under the banner of efficiency, it laboured to sell the New Zealand nation on a very emotive issue - persuading the public to accept the unequal treatment of their children - in other words, to eliminate human and social waste.


During the period 1900 to 1945, the drive for efficiency and the myth of equality of educational opportunity in education were inextricably linked together by society's changing vision of the kinds of people (deemed) worthy of further education and the type of schooling they needed. Over time, the myth seemed to validate the conventional wisdom that talent and hard-work were the principal determinants of achievement and upward social mobility. In short, it lent weight to the idea that schooling was an equalising agent: “a social mechanism permitting “meritocracy” and ameliorating the inheritance of social position”.\textsuperscript{119} Put simply, equality of educational opportunity was simply ‘social efficiency’ in disguise. By tracing, in a chronological sequence, the consequential growth and modification of the public schooling system between 1900 and 1945, it will be demonstrated that this equality myth was in fact synonymous with the quest for social efficiency. Equality of educational opportunity endorsed the reality that:

Other things being equal, and under broad conditions, educational growth as such has the effect of increasing rather than decreasing social and economic inequality, even in the case of an educational system that becomes more equalitarian.\textsuperscript{120}

This thesis will be analysed in the three chapters that follow, each of which approximately span a fifteen year period. Drawing on changes to and experiences in the primary and post-primary arenas, the viability of this line of argument will become apparent.

That said, however, a brief examination of the significance of the 1877\textit{ Education Act} will serve as an entree to the efficiency-equality argument presented in the second chapter. It will provide a supplementary background to the major educational change that


\textsuperscript{120} R. Boudon, \textit{Educational Opportunity, and Social Inequality: Changing Prospects in Western Society}, Canada: John Wiley and Sons, 1974, p. 187; W.G. Fleming, \textit{Educational Opportunity: the pursuit of equality}, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1974, p. 14. When assessing the merit of the Canadian education system, Fleming expresses a similar view: “Education has come to be regarded as the chief means of equalizing social opportunity. Whether it serves this purpose in a given society would seem to depend on its institutional manifestations and on the extent of access to it. Historically the school, more often than not, has been a major buttress of inequality”; B. Davies, \textit{Social Control And Education: Contemporary Sociology Of The School}, London: Methuen, 1976, p. 135. Citing the educational theorist Bourdieu, Davies also concludes that the school is not a “liberating force and a means of mobility... [but rather]... one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern.”
follows, illustrating both an extension of educational opportunities and the evolvement and acceleration of efficient schooling in New Zealand. This examination will also highlight a most important point - that while greater emphasis was given to the adopted philosophy of educational efficiency during the years 1900 to 1945, it had, albeit in a less accentuated form, been unwittingly practiced through the limited implementation of free, compulsory and secular primary schooling, by way of the 1877 Education Act.

The following chapter will examine some of the major educational developments between 1900 and 1914, including the ‘democratisation’ of secondary schooling achieved through the introduction of ‘free places’ in 1903; the establishment of Technical High Schools; the expansion of academic departments in District High Schools; and the growth in popularity of the Standard Six Proficiency and Competency Examinations. These educational changes will be placed in the context of a dynamic social backdrop. The growing socio-political emphasis on health, crime and national stability generated by the increased demands of war and the consequences of an expanding (school age) population, women’s suffrage, labour legislation and rural migration, as well as concern over the strength of the family unit will be shown to be important factors making possible the call for greater efficiency in schools under the banner of ‘equality of opportunity for the most able’.

Social events and educational happenings between 1915 and 1929 are investigated in Chapter Three. The changes here reveal not only that education was commonly perceived as an equalising agent but also that the demand for the production of efficient citizens by schools was still an all-pervasive force in the growth and development of formal educational institutions. The renewed call for greater social efficiency and the response to this, especially in the educational arena, is clearly visible in an era marked by the realisation of the nations isolated economic position and susceptibility to outside socio-political forces. The effects of World War One, increased unemployment and social angst over the apparent decline in standards of morality as well as concern surrounding both the birth and mortality rates of infant New Zealanders will be but some of the examples chosen that necessitated educational change and the reorientation of the social ideal of educational equality. The continual territorial rivalry between the three post-primary institutions - the academic, technical and district high schools - the establishment of newly-introduced Intermediate schools, and the employment of the newly-developed intelligence tests to better stream pupils into courses commensurate with their abilities, aptitudes and skills will also be
examined in this light. Under the equality banner, the period 1915-1929 will be shown to have been marked by the formal recognition of the different aptitudes, skills and abilities of students which was celebrated by schools as an efficient and hence progressive policy. Developments in the name of ‘equality’ were now structured so that all people (not just the ‘able’) were recognised as having some potential and thus were seen as socially useful. Assessing and then utilising the ‘whole’ potential of pupils had become a recognisable goal in education.

Between 1930 and 1945, this assessment of pupil potential was re-evaluated several times under the ever-changing umbrella of ‘equality’. National introspection forged in times of hardship, such as in the depression and as a result of wars, saw access to schools limited to the most ‘able’ and those deemed worthy of education. This preservation of resources in the name of ‘national efficiency’ and justice was widely resented by the public whose newly-developed social conscience now demanded greater equality for their young across the whole social and educational spectrum. In better economic times, financial retrenchment and social suffering was not easily forgotten by the people. Socio-political and economic changes, for example improved working conditions and the birth of the Social Security Act (1938), symbolised this general feeling. In the educational arena, the abolition of Proficiency, which ‘opened the doors’ of post-primary institutions to all people, the proposals of the Thomas Report - for example, the ‘common core curriculum’ as well as the establishment of a revamped School Certificate, all seemed to point toward the birth of equality of opportunity for all. Better times were ahead for everyone in this new nation. However, and notwithstanding the sweetness of this delusion, demands for greater educational opportunities to enhance the benefits provided by this welfarist state had to be tempered with reality. As will be shown in Chapter Four, the new equality ideal still was directly influenced by New Zealand’s ‘quest for efficiency’. ‘Equality of opportunity’ was indeed a ‘myth’ which inspired educational change and in doing so disguised the efficiency motive, cleverly giving the public no choice but to accept the expansion of schooling as simply the provision of real equality for all.

Chapter Five will conclude that there were many common links between the equality myth and the efficiency ideal which made educational expansion in this egalitarian society not only possible but, for many sections of the community and in many instances, naively popular.
CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF ‘EFFICIENT’ PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLING, 1900 - 1914.

The social system of this Dominion is based upon democracy, and the Dominion’s continued growth and prosperity depends absolutely upon the social and industrial qualities of its people.¹

Such was this conviction that the period 1900 to 1914 marked a huge transformation in the development of ways to improve social efficiency through schooling. Educational and, by implication, social efficiency were pursued under the sturdy banner of equality of access for those deemed most able to partake in, and benefit from, the extension of these opportunities. Changes in schooling reflected this form of organic progressivism wherein the educational needs of the individual and the social collective were seen to be mutually beneficial and needed to be melded together. As George Hogben, the Inspector-General of Schools (1899-1915) noted,

[a]s teaching should be real...having direct relation to the practical needs of life, so should the control of educational affairs be not merely the function of the special officials, but the business of every citizen, and thus, so to speak, the vital contact with the heart of the nation.²

However, before launching into the ‘efficiency-equality’ argument that so dominated this period, it is pertinent to note some of the major developments in schooling prior to 1900 because these changes worked to shape the later evolution of the education system. They also prove useful as a way in which to reflect upon the development of a distinct national identity and the maturation and acceptance of refined efficiency doctrines in schooling during the years 1900 to 1914.


THE 1877 EDUCATION ACT

A brief examination of the 1877 Education Act illustrates this point. Hailed as evidence of progressive educational policy and enacted after lengthy and acrimonious debate, the Act was the first in a long series of social efficiency measures launched throughout New Zealand. The Act theoretically provided free, compulsory and secular state primary schooling for all school age children (that is, those from five to fifteen years old) on a national basis.\(^3\) Couched within the egalitarian ethos of the day, the Act emanated educational efficiency since the cost of up to ten years' primary education for all school children nationwide was now to be borne by the State.\(^4\) It was a policy which sought to rectify the inequity acknowledged to exist in the case of children from working-class backgrounds and it attracted support from politicians such as Sir George Grey who earlier had advised that “if the Government have taken it upon themselves to provide a system of compulsory education, they ought to make it absolutely free. Do not make your system of education an unjust one, pressing heavily upon some classes of the community and not upon others”\(^5\).

In framing the Act, politicians had claimed that only by making primary schooling compulsory could education “tell equally on every portion of the community”.\(^6\) The essence of the argument was that if all children were compelled by law to attend school, then all would receive equal access to the primary school curriculum. Fundamentally the Act was a social efficiency measure which was aligned with the new rhetorical spirit of welfarism adopted by the government to promote universal elementary education as a necessary ‘good’ for the well-being of all citizens and also society as a collective whole. As McKenzie has observed, “Idealistic young leaders in the early days of settlement sought earnestly to persuade the pioneering community that a just and morally healthy society could be built

\(^3\) NZPD, 1877, Vol 26, p. 132.

\(^4\) L. Webb, The Control of Education in New Zealand, Auckland: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1937, p. 4. This newly-established provision, that the State would pay for the elementary education of all children, came into being as from the first of January, 1878.

\(^5\) NZPD, 1877, Vol 25, p. 223.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 178.
only upon the foundation of a population universally accorded the right to be educated.”

For this reason much was made of the introduction of compulsory education as a form of social control and the sincere expectation that this could somehow prevent youth from falling victim to alcohol and criminal activities. Charles Bowen’s address to the House exemplified such concerns. Elementary education, stated the Kaiapoi Member for Parliament, would “prevent the population of any district from falling into the absolute brutishness into which an uneducated people have a tendency to descend”. William Fox, the ex-Premier, was more tactful on the matter declaring that “we have no right, apart from any selfish ground on the score of civilization, to allow the children of such men to grow up in ignorance”.

Freedom from this so-called ‘ignorance’ was but one of the philosophical tenets behind the 1877 Education Act. Religious persecution, which traditionally had pervaded the educational and social systems of their homelands, was also a problem which begged attention in 1877. Under the provisions of the Act, politicians were united in their belief that State had “no right to do anything which...[would]...interfere with a man’s religious convictions... [as]...A man’s...[and so presumably, his family’s]...religious opinion... [was]...a matter between himself and his conscience and between himself and his Maker”. The logic behind this was that if public harmony and economic progress were to remain prime objectives, equality of educational access at the primary school level would

---


8 NZPD, 1877, Vol 24, p. 32. In this way elementary education was promoted as a individual and collective good.

9 Ibid., 1877, Vol 25, p. 233. His reference to ‘such men’ was essentially alluding to those males of the lower classes who frequented the public houses on a regular basis. Sentiments such as these were popular with the well-to-do who, from an ego-centric pulpit of moral and economic superiority, responded to the perceived growth of irresponsible youth (larrkins) and destitute and neglected children by whole-heartedly supporting compulsion in primary education.

10 E. Olssen et al. A Century Of Change: New Zealand 1800-1900, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1989, pp. 324-325, 327. This was not to say however that tensions between Catholics and Protestants did not remain high; NZPD, 1877, Vol 25, p. 179. Recognition was also given to this by the politician Gisbourne who acknowledged in the House that “experience has shown that if a State enforces religious education in its school system it will immediately create religious animosity and dissension, and it will do more harm that good.”

11 Ibid., 1877, Vol 25, p. 178.
necessitate effective, socially cohesive and therefore secular education policies. As a result, the New Zealand legislature was adamant that parents' religious persuasion would not interfere with their children's attendance at the nearest primary school. In fact the primary school syllabus of instruction was structured deliberately so as to exclude all religious education during school hours and to make those subjects that might cause offence to some students subject to a conscience clause.

The notion of a distinct New Zealand identity was contained in the Education Act which supported the efficiency philosophy of basic universal education rather than the traditional and well-known British idea that "education would unsettle the masses and teach them not to be content with the state of life in which it had pleased God to place...[them]". However, as mentioned earlier, the effectiveness of this legislation was tempered by the reality of child labour wherein those children living in rural areas were expected to contribute their labour to sustain the family economy. Formal education, in this instance, therefore came at a price when judged against school children's paid employment opportunities.

Despite this, the Education Act was well-received by many sectors of the community, especially amongst those in the higher echelons of society. Its attraction lay in the utilitarian ethos of the day which proposed that educational advance or, in this case, educational expansion was a necessary precondition to social improvement and prosperity. An efficient economy, it was widely believed, was the product of an educated society, which

---


13 A.G. Butchers, The Education System, Auckland: National Printing Company, 1932, p. 78. For example, topics like the Reformation could offend some students and so were left out of the required elementary school curriculum. Equality of educational opportunity was theoretically provided for all children, regardless of their families' religious beliefs, by the 1877 Education Act.


15 D. McKenzie, Education And Social Structure: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education, Dunedin: New Zealand College of Education, 1982, pp. 3, 27-29. For working-class children the economic law of opportunity cost painted a grim picture with respect to their future in formal schooling because it determined that it was often too costly to the immediate family economy to have children educated beyond the 'basics' in elementary institutions. Government inaction compounded this problem as it did not, at this time, seek to implement child labour laws which would have prevented the majority of youth from working during school hours. The failure of the State to overwrite the value of cheap labour meant, in this instance, that working rural and urban children were not given equality of educational access to the primary curriculum.
in turn, allowed all to prosper.\textsuperscript{16} The assumption that an educated and literate society would provide the solution to the rising crime rate further legitimated the Act’s apparent ‘public worth’.\textit{The idea was simple efficiency} - schooling the masses would remove potential young offenders from the streets, minimising what the middle classes perceived as being criminal activity and thereby promoting social order and, by implication, economic growth.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, Bowen was convinced that common primary schooling was the route to economic and social salvation and he made this point clear to his parliamentary colleagues by drawing on Australian statistics which illustrated a connection between crime rates and lack of basic education in Victoria.\textsuperscript{18}

Enhancing the Acts’ appeal further were overseas humanitarian doctrines that had become increasingly influential in New Zealand which claimed that all people by virtue of their humanity had the ‘right to be educated’, albeit at a basic level in elementary schools.\textsuperscript{19} Within an era when revolutions in industry placed harsh demands on workers and calls for a “more democratic form of government”\textsuperscript{20} increasingly began to be voiced, this humanitarian argument was not without influence in causing those in power to rethink their conservative stance of leaving the majority of youth in a “state of ignorance”.\textsuperscript{21}

It is clear that the impact of the 1877 \textit{Education Act} upon New Zealand’s developing society and dynamic identity was monumental. Like the welfare canon (under

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} NZPD. 1877, Vol 25, p. 174. Curtis, the Member of Parliament for Nelson, alluded to this in the House when he stated that it is ‘absolutely necessary in order to secure uniformity in the system of education throughout the colony. I do not mean uniformity in details but the kind of uniformity which will secure in equal measures to all parts of the colony the great advantages of public education’; R.K. Harker, “Education And Equality”, \textit{Studies In New Zealand Social Problems}, P.F Green, ed., (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1990): 197. The want of “educated and industrious men and women” to make up a trained and effective work force is usually the prime factor motivating educational expansion, that is, over and above the idealistic quest to achieve some form of equality of educational opportunity.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the mantle of national betterment), the principle of educational opportunity, once admitted, was capable of a more extensive and comprehensive application. By its application, the Act had paved the way for a later extension of access provisions as it had worked to ensure an ‘upward drift’ in the number of children advancing to higher classes in the primary schools. However, while it generally was ‘felt’ that the primary educational programme “most suitable and most acceptable to the country...[would]...be free, compulsory and secular”, Bowen highlighted a more important point regarding the coverage of the Act. He envisaged that the Act was not intended to encourage the children whose vocation is that of honest labour to waste in the higher schools time which might be better be devoted to learning a trade, when they have not got the special talent by which that higher education might be made immediately useful.

According to Bowen, educating the whole primary school age population beyond the ‘basic’ school subjects was absurd for this was costly in terms of an individual’s time and the State’s financial resources. The majority in the House appeared to concur with this belief. Pre-empting Taylor’s efficiency treatise, these politicians argued that post-primary schooling was a commodity not to be wasted on those who would never ‘benefit’ from it. They regarded any suggestion to extend access provisions to the post-primary school level as educationally inefficient since they saw this as a futile endeavour and a shameful waste of money; it was considered neither desirable nor, pragmatic to legislate such a move.

Consequently, although equality of access to schooling was implemented in 1878, it was an ideal which did nothing to extend to post-primary schooling.

26 R.J. Bates, “Social Class, Education and Cultural Reproduction in New Zealand”, Schools in New Zealand Society - A book of readings, G.H. Robinson and B.T.O’Rourke, eds., (Auckland, Longman Paul, 1980): 257. Bowen’s statement in the House works to highlight the assumption that secondary schooling was still to be the preserve of the elite and certain children could never benefit from such schooling. As Bates notes, inherent in Bowen’s assertion was the idea that “There exists a natural order which has ordained an unequal distribution of talent and...so...the unequal distribution of life-roles”. Accordingly, there was no point in providing free post-primary education because the funds were essentially wasted on the less able; W.L. Renwick, Moving Targets. Six Essays on Educational Policy, with an introductory essay by C.E. Beeby, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1986, p. 26. The reason that it was not realistic to extend the equality of educational opportunity ideal into the post-primary arena is noted
The interim period between 1878 and 1900 markedly altered the final outcome however as such efficiency-oriented views brought those legislators in the House directly into conflict with the general egalitarian sentiment. The growth in pupil numbers, coupled with the failure of the 1877 Education Act to make provision for a system of secondary schools, put the legislators at loggerheads with the public and exacerbated calls for greater access to the high schools along similar lines as the 1877 Act. This debate was fuelled by the Education Reserves Act, a controversial piece of legislation that gave government support, through national taxation, to those secondary schools patronised overwhelmingly by the wealthy but largely paid for by the poor who contributed “five-sixths of the colony’s taxation”. In effect, this Act legalised educational subsidies to fund the schooling of the rich while the poor and those in the working and lower-middle-classes could not even afford to attend the academic post-primary schools. Labour issues bought to the fore by the 1880s economic depression intensified the eagerness of parents and concerned groups - for example, the Trades and Labour Councils, the National Council of Women, and many farmers - for greater educational opportunities to be provided to enable their children to gain the necessary school credentials to secure employment. The 1894 Factory Act, which banned the employment and labour exploitation of children under fourteen years of age, meant that many students who had already passed Standard Six at a young age were forced to remain in the primary schools. Those advocating greater and freer access to the post-

---

27 A.E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Wellington: New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 61. By the enactment of the Education Reserves Act a quarter of the revenue from the colonies educational reserves was set aside for the maintenance of the elite academic secondary schools.

28 Ibid., p. 73.

29 Ibid., p. 109. Campbell suggests that this move against the privileges of the wealthy was not a philanthropic venture launched by the middle-classes on behalf of those socially (and so educationally) disadvantaged, rather it was a manoeuvre to ensure their enjoyment of “the rights and privileges that went with their social class”.

30 I.A. McLaren, “Education and Politics: Background to the Secondary Schools Act, 1903, Part I: Secondary Education for the Privileged”, New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 1. No. 5. (1970): 110-111. With the expansion of the industrial and commercial world, employers began to look for employees with credentials beyond those provided at the primary school level. The new economic recovery after the depression ensured that it was a ‘buyers market’ in terms of employment opportunities. This, in turn, had the affect of intensifying the call for greater educational opportunities to be provided so that ‘able’ children could gain higher status credentials and thus, better paid work.
primary arena were not lost on the efficiency argument that the time and talents of children compelled to return to the elementary schools were wasted under this regime. Indeed, circumstances such as these added weight to the shared agitation and led to repeated demands for free, albeit conditional, access to secondary schooling.

The position of those pupils who were denied entry to the publicly endowed secondary schools owing to their parents’ inability to pay fees also created much public resentment because they were only too aware that their taxes helped to fund these exclusive schools. This antagonism towards the privileged secondary schools was exaggerated further in the public mind by the knowledge that many secondary school pupils were ‘very young’ - that is, of primary school age - and that their presence in these schools counted against the possibility of offering more scholarships to the deserving children who had already passed Standard Six. Indeed, even the Premier (Robert Stout) was outraged by the fact that many secondary schools were markedly inefficient as they were enrolling young, rich children who had not yet passed Standard Six. Clearly frustrated by the injustice of a system funded by the taxpayer but which excluded some ‘able’ students from higher schooling, Stout stated:

I have seen schools where there were children of eight, ten and eleven who could not pass Standard Three... But these schools are endowed with public funds... If I had the power I would turn out every pupil who could not pass Standard Six... The highest education must be brought within the reach of all so that all the brightest intellects may be highly educated for the benefit of the whole country.32

It was this type of dissension that motivated government action. The secondary schools’ refusal to modify their entrance policies only intensified social resentment, creating a stronger, more united voice against the educationally wasteful and classist nature of these institutions.33


32 Ibid., p. 79.

THE 1899 MALBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL ACT

The growing public discontent did not go unnoticed by the Liberal Government who were anxious to secure votes in the forthcoming 1899 election and Seddon, taking his cue from the public, promised educational reform and experimentation, albeit on a small scale. The introduction in 1899 of the Malborough High School Act secured free places for those pupils who passed the newly established Standard Six Proficiency Examination. Widely publicised, this Act cast Seddon and the Liberals as the champions of educational reform and, given the ill-feeling towards the secondary schools, provided a powerful and popular platform for political electioneering.

Maintaining a balance of power in parliament after 1899, the Liberals still were conscious of the need for effective educational reform. Public discontent could no longer be ignored. They insisted that the government design educational policies to achieve what the Liberals had promised - the creation of a ‘new’ and ‘progressive’ country which could not only hold its own internationally but also strengthen the moral fabric of New Zealand society. The politician Robert Stout had alluded to this idea earlier in 1896 when he had stated that, “Education is of more importance [to the nation] even than roads, bridges or...”


35 I. Cumming et al., History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p. 152. The Proficiency Examination came to serve as a bridge of free access from the primary to the post-primary sector. It was an external test, administered by school inspectors, outside of the influence of the school. To gain this award, pupils had to obtain at least 30 per cent in both English and arithmetic, the aggregate (average) marks of English, arithmetic, geography and drawing being no less than 50 per cent; A.G. Butchers, The Education System, Auckland: National Printing Company, 1932, p. 151. Further, the inspector had to be satisfied that the pupil had received “sufficient instruction” in the other compulsory and additional subjects before the student could be awarded with a certificate of Proficiency. This action illustrated an attempt by government to ensure pupils received a well-rounded general education. It also served as a stop-gap measure, ensuring that taxpayers money which was filtered through government coffers was not wasted and that the standard of the Proficiency examination was preserved.


37 S. Eldred-Grigg, New Zealand Working People 1890-1990, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, p. 233. The turn of the century heralded promises of a new and better world from social and political commentators alike. They avowed that a ‘new age’ was dawning. Traditional social practices like sweated labour as well as poverty and alcoholism were denounced in favour of new modes of being and thinking. These modes were thought to be socially cohesive and were to be bought to the fore and achieved by uniting technological advance with improved welfare policies.
Accordingly, during the next fourteen years (1900-1914) profound policy changes to achieve this end were woven into the education system. The ideal of equality of educational access was adjusted to ensure the extension of greater high school opportunities for those deemed most ‘able’ to benefit from them - i.e. the ‘deserving able’. In this vein, the systematic creation and categorisation of three distinct groups of students (academic, agricultural, and practical) within the post-primary school system was endorsed socially. The philosophy behind this educational reform also shifted. In 1898, a government report had indicated that “the formation of character should be the chief aim of a national system of education” but by 1901 this object had now been modified so as to include citizenship training as the paramount aim. The efficacy of this move demonstrated the social reality that efficiency doctrines were at the heart of those reforms that aimed to achieve individual betterment and thus social progress through educational expansion. It is to these developments that this chapter now turns by examining the aim and impact of the 1901 District High School Regulations.

THE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL REGULATIONS, 1901

Two years after the 1899 general election, regulations for the introduction of conditional free places at district high schools were issued by the Inspector-General of Schools, George Hogben. These regulations sought to redress some of the existing


40 NZPD, 1901, Vol. 116, p. 614. It was upon discussing the inspection of private schools bill in 1901 that this point was made clear - “The object of education is to train up the citizens of the State, and for that reason the compulsory method has been adopted. But here you allow children in private schools to go uninspected, and thus you do not know whether those children are receiving a proper education or not.”

41 H. Roth, George Hogben, A Biography, Christchurch: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1952, p. 117. By these Regulations, Hogben had been credited by some historians with deliberately using the free place provisions of the district high schools to force the hand of the urban secondary schools into accepting scholars with a free place. Roth argues that this was not the case since the establishment of more district highs was a decision out of Hogben’s hands, sanctioned by the Cabinet for political reasons.
inequalities between town and country and stood not only as a marked recognition of this issue but also illustrated the political agendas of Liberal parliamentarians who were, in the main, dependant upon the rural vote. As McLaren has noted,

[d]uring the 1899 election campaign, he [Seddon] had been accused, sometimes by his own followers, of neglecting rural interests, particularly educational. His response was to let it be known that the Government was contemplating a District High School Bill to create a network of free secondary schools... [even though]... no bill was forthcoming.\(^\text{42}\)

Political considerations underpinned future educational growth as evidenced by the introduction in 1900 (and revised in 1902) of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act which aimed to promote a "new type of education"\(^\text{43}\) to counterbalance the post-primary schools rigid adherence to the traditional academic curriculum. As Openshaw et al. noted, this Act was intended to be read in conjunction with the 1901 regulations which provided more extensive curricula options that departed from the usual and highly regarded academic ones.\(^\text{44}\) The nature of this change stemmed from Hogben's (and later Seddon's) conviction that academic training was, for most people, irrelevant at best and at worst totally useless.\(^\text{45}\) Declaring that school programmes were "framed to a large extent so as to lead up to the matriculation and junior scholarship examinations of the University - and yet not one boy or girl in twenty does or can go to the University",\(^\text{46}\) Hogben concluded that "the whole of our secondary education would be far more useful to the State if it were more natural, more practical and less abstract than it is at present."\(^\text{47}\)


In terms of the 1901 regulations, Hogben's idea was synonymous with the efficiency philosophy wherein rural education was to be determined by what those in the rural localities wanted. Because many rural pupils were destined to work in the farming sector, Hogben reasoned that the most 'able' pupils would benefit from higher schooling in agricultural subjects and the like. He assumed that rural schooling should be attuned to the local environs wherein new (scientific) educational methods would be taught to, and then applied by, those residing in country areas. Accordingly, he hoped that the introduction of a free-place system in the district high schools would work in conjunction with the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, liberating the school curriculum from the stranglehold of academic work by placing more emphasis, and hence more value, on practical subjects. Training pupils in the employment areas that they planned to follow was Hogben's central expectation. Thus his objective was "to encourage school authorities to de-emphasise academic instruction in district high schools" and concentrate instead on vocational, "bread and butter studies". Such a focus, he maintained, would not only allow rural children to make appropriate subject choices but also help them to "understand better their duties as citizens of the Empire". Indeed, by 1902, the district schools were acutely aware of Hogben's intentions when he reminded them that,

[t]he grants for manual instruction (including practical science) under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act are payable to school classes in addition to the special district high school grant, so that there is no excuse on the ground of expense for the comparative neglect of these subjects. There is no reason why any of our district high schools, or indeed any of our secondary schools, should take as their model the lower forms of the old...[academic]...English Grammar School.

However, like Seddon, Hogben was deeply disappointed by the actions of rural pupils who generally demanded access to academic (rather than practical/vocational) studies

---


51 Ibid.

which were regarded as the pathway to advanced status, wealth and job security.\(^{53}\) Predictably, the primary school rolls climbed as more children stayed in the hope of entering their local high school and soon after, the district high schools’ rolls escalated significantly.\(^{54}\) Rural parents and pupils, having learnt from the (long) depression, readily took this opportunity to attend their local high school and to study academic subjects which allowed them social mobility. Armed with academic credentials, children from the farming sector were better placed to obtain work in the towns. Work aspirations, job and income security were thus the primary factors which motivated the high rural response to this educational reform.\(^{55}\)

Notwithstanding Hogben’s best intentions, town-folk were critical of the 1901 provisions which effectively gave rural children access to academic educational opportunities unavailable in the urban area. Advocates who had long been calling for the introduction of conditional free-places in urban areas now renewed their attack on the Government.\(^{56}\) United by the cause, many parents and employers concluded that the lack of government action perpetuated a mass injustice against ‘able’ children in the urban localities. So dissatisfied were they that they held public debates and involved the media in their struggle against what they regarded as being the inefficient and unequal provision of educational equality between town and country pupils. So strong was this opinion that even usually conservative newspapers such as the Lyttleton Times highlighted the social outrage proclaiming that “The public will not be put off with paltry excuses”!\(^{57}\)


\(^{54}\) H. Lee, “The Junior Civil Service Examination Reconsidered. A Study of the Changing Function of A Competitive Examination, 1900-1912”, Reinterpreting the Educational Past, R. Openshaw and D. McKenzie, eds., (Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1987): 110-111, 117-118. Lee extends this argument adding, “It, therefore, comes as no surprise that the district high schools’ courses, while originally intended to provide a strongly rural bias to their curriculum, were drawn up largely with a view to preparing pupils for recognized public examinations.”

\(^{55}\) H. Roth, George Hogben. A Biography, Christchurch: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1952, p. 113. As Roth notes, “Country people were not interested in Hogben’s theories of a ‘new’ education. They wanted to see their children in clerical and professional positions and no education board dared to resist that pressure. The Government itself boasted that it had ‘brought training for the Civil Service and the University down to the very level of the children of the workers’”.


THE 1902 FREE PLACE REGULATIONS

Sentiments such as these compelled the Government to act. Re-elected in 1902 and "left in no doubt as to what certain sections of the public wanted with regard to secondary education" 58, they were again eager to pacify discontent. Expediency warranted action. In December 1902, urban children were given the same opportunities as students in the rural areas when the city secondary schools' boards of governors were empowered to offer the same free place provisions as established in rural New Zealand in 1901. 59 However, some secondary boards initially refused to take up the offer for fear of losing the social prestige accorded to their institutions by virtue of their exclusive policies. 60 These refusals outraged Seddon who issue a note of warning to the maverick secondary school boards. He observed that,

[t]he other secondary schools have not seen their way to adopt the proposals of the Government. I regret this very much because I think there are a very large number of pupils who have been injured and whose prospects have been blighted by the course taken by these controlling bodies...we must compel...those bodies to do justice to the children in their districts. 61

THE 1903 SECONDARY SCHOOLS ACT

In 1903, convinced that the exclusive policies of the secondary schools helped to restrict the use of their generous endowments for the benefit of a restricted class of pupils, Seddon acted. In that year the Secondary Schools Act was passed, making the acceptance of free place pupils compulsory and, if rejected, making mandatory the provision of additional scholarships by secondary school boards of governors, funded from twenty per


59 A.G. Butchers, The Education System, Auckland: National Printing Company, 1932, pp. 124-125. Regulations stipulated that six pounds per head would be paid to the secondary schools if the pupil was admitted without having to pay fees, on the proviso that one free place was already given out for every fifty pounds net income from endowments. The age of the student was also another condition of the Government grant.

60 I. McLaren, "The Politics Of Secondary Education In Victorian New Zealand", Reinterpreting the Educational Past. R Ovenshaw and D.McKenzie, eds., (Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1987): 79-80. Wanganui Girl's College stood as the academic school most resistant to change for even after the 1903 Secondary Schools Act, this institution refused "to enrol free place pupils".

cent of the revenue from their annual endowment income.\textsuperscript{62} Hence the common call against privilege, which in part had been responsible for the genesis of the Act was now satisfied as the conditional provision of equality of educational opportunity seemed to be a fair and just solution to the problem of excluding many talented working-class children from the secondary education system. This belief was exemplified in the House by Hanan (Member of Parliament for Invercargill) who stated:

Sir, it is for the deserving children of the poorer classes of the community, for the deserving students, that every liberal and right-minded man wishes to secure cheaper secondary education in this colony. We must not, I hold, lag behind in the world’s march of educational progress. Our children must receive as good an education as that which is being afforded in other countries for the children therein. Consequently, it is our bounden duty to provide such factors and facilities as will enable every gifted child, though of the poorest in the land, to take advantage of the opportunity of taking his or her right place in the world, which the creator has given them ability to fill, utterly regardless of the social position and circumstances of the parents who gave them birth.\textsuperscript{63}

Bolstering his stance on the issue, Hanan drew on British precedent in an effort to link the Act not only to individual betterment but also to the well-being of society. The equation was simple efficiency. He declared that,

a good collegiate education...for those who need it and want it, is as much the interests of the many as a good primary education. They are both in the interests of all - that is, the community. It was, I think Everett who observed, “It is of human things the highest interest of the State to put the means of obtaining a good primary school education and a good collegiate school education within the reach of the largest number of its children”.\textsuperscript{64}

The belief in the existence of a common bond between the individual and community was evident in this statement and understandable when viewed within the context of other national developments, including the implementation of child protection laws and the return of soldiers from war (1899-1901) in South Africa.\textsuperscript{65} Dynamics such as


\textsuperscript{63} NZPD, 1903, Vol 123, p. 347.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{65} NZPD, 1901, Vol 116, p. 309. The debate over the 1901 Eight Hours Bill exemplifies this point. Concern for the welfare of children was extended even into the employment arena. Anxious that many families were using their children as slave labour, some sought to challenge this practice, by arguing for example, that in terms of fair employment legislation, “we ought...[not]...save those people...who are demoralising their
these forged a sense of social introspection and Kiwi nationalism. In this environment, an emphasis was placed upon the idea that New Zealand people, especially children, had to be properly cared for and protected by the State. Sentiments such as these were often expressed in the House. McGowan, the then Minister of Justice, declared that “we must go on, and in order to do so we must see that our children are being brought up as to be properly equipped for the battle of life, not only mentally, but physically”. Consequently, the benefits of bringing up “stalwart and well-grown people” seemed socially apparent. In view of the circumstances of the day, it was predictable that educational change should follow this communal and mutually beneficial philosophy along the culturally correct egalitarian lines of fair play and justice.

Accordingly, by implementing the 1903 Secondary Schools Act, the Seddon-Hogben partnership appeared committed to reform on the basis of the efficiency ideals of fairness and justice. The establishment of a free-place system, in the eyes of many contemporaries, was a significant step forward in the furtherance of this aim. Indeed it was on this very issue that Seddon proudly remarked “With respect to secondary education the wants of this colony have been fairly met”.

own flesh and blood, in the shape of their children, by subjecting them to such unnatural hours of labour”; Ibid., pp. 459-461. In view of the importance of children, politicians also considered child protection legislation so that youth who were ‘gravely neglected’ and who kept ‘bad company’ would be protected by State agencies and put on the ‘safe road’ away from what several Members of the House referred to as the “criminal” and “vicious” class of people; Ibid., p. 464. Similar sentiments were expressed in a discussion regarding school attendance in 1901 where the protection of children from the laxity of their own parents in failing to send them to school was mooted in the House; Ibid., pp. 286-287. As a result of this war, the fate of returning soldiers and indeed of New Zealand as a nation, was dealt with in the House. Politicians mulled over a multitude of issues, not the least of which was that New Zealand not be subservient to other nations. These harshness of war experience(s) ensured that a socially introspective and cohesive feeling pervaded the House during this period and the implementation of the Compulsory Drill Bill in schools aptly reflected this perception. One Member, for example, suggested that in order to preserve peace we, as a nation, must be militant through education or, “we should be wiped off the face of the earth as a nation, become subordinate to other nations, and fall back into a most deplorable condition”. It was statements like this one which deeply reflected the evolution and indeed expansion of a distinct New Zealand identity. In short, war had a unifying effect on New Zealand as a nation.

66 Ibid., p. 302.
67 Ibid., p. 460.
The developments in schooling from 1901-1903 clearly indicated that New Zealand's education system had embraced the basic egalitarian ideal of meritocracy wherein all 'deserving' pupils were entitled to access some form of post-primary education. But only the academically able were allowed to proceed to higher education at the advanced post-primary level. Whilst primary schooling provided the 'basics', secondary education was considered appropriate only for students who showed an aptitude for learning. The myth of equality of educational opportunity was thus encapsulated by this 'survival of the fittest' mentality as the system sought efficiently to weed out those unable to benefit from extended educational opportunities in what was seen to be a fair manner - i.e., by way of a public examination. Notwithstanding the altruistic or political intentions of policy makers, the adherence to this distinct egalitarian identity created an unwavering belief in the fairness of the system and in doing so hid a deference to efficiency doctrines squarely behind the idea of hard work and effort, individual accountability and failure. This was evident in later developments in the post-primary arena which consequentially stemmed from the 1903 Act and now merit further consideration.

THE RAISING OF THE 'STANDARDS' OF THE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

Prior to 1905, an unprecedented rise in the rate of pupil retention occurred at higher levels in the primary schools that had not been anticipated by educational planners. Relying on Hogben's prediction, the Liberals estimated that approximately 350 students would qualify for entry to academic secondary education every year. However, Hogben's failure

69 G.D. Lee, "Open The Doors: Unbar The Doors: The development of free place legislation and its effects upon Otago Boys' High School in the years between 1900 and 1905", M.Ed. Thesis, Dunedin: University of Otago, 1983, p. 186. This point was well-exemplified in the public arena in 1908 in a January issue of the Otago Daily Times, wherein it was asserted that, "the primary school should be closely related to the secondary school... the one is the feeder of the other. The door has been opened whereby capable boys and girls may pass from the lower to the higher schools and enjoy the advantages of high school education without money and without price." Although, as has previously been mentioned, the economic law of opportunity cost meant that for many working children, post-primary education was not really a viable option in view of the alternative, that is (family) starvation.

70 H. Roth, George Hogben. A Biography, Christchurch: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1952, p. 116. "Hogben had calculated that about 2,200 children would qualify for secondary education every year, but that only half of these would want to go to a secondary school. If free tuition was restricted to those pupils who passed Standard VI with distinction before the age of 13...[and a half]..., only 350 would qualify each year. These calculations proved hopelessly wrong.

to account for the demand from students in Standard Six, as well as the elusive Standard Seven classes, coupled with his belief that the District High Schools would not overlap their function of generally providing rural based studies meant that his calculations were wide off the mark. In point of fact, many pupils sought to avail themselves of an education which could provide them with social mobility, enhancing both their status and their wealth.

Such an outcome was entirely predictable. Denied the opportunity of academic schooling and the chance to gain credentials beyond the primary school level for so long, ambitious children from all walks of life were more than willing to take up the challenge if it could benefit them. Academic education offered a ticket to a better life, enhancing their chances to become socially and, in some cases, geographically mobile. It offered, as McKenzie notes, “the opportunity to differentiate oneself from one’s fellows, to win certificates of attainment that opened the way to more highly regarded vocational careers”.71 More and more children began to enter for and to pass the Proficiency Examination which placed severe stress on a system which had earlier been designed to cater for the ‘able’ but which had come to include “the average as well”.72 This demand was financially draining on the Government as more resources had to be provided for the establishment of more schools, the employment of more teachers and the utilisation of more books, examiners and inspectors.73 It seemed, as McLaren notes, that

having set his hand to the plough, Seddon could not turn back. More by accident than intent, New Zealand was committed to the principle of free secondary education...[she had]...accepted the ‘consequences of democracy’ in her educational system.74


This was not to say, however, that the Liberals were willing to “turn back” to a more rigid system of conditional free entry to the secondary schools. Indeed, it was the unexpected increase in Proficiency candidates which pressed the government to act to stem the flow of too many ‘average’ (that is, ‘unfit’) pupils entering the academic schools. Hogben himself took the view that too many pupils who were suited for practical work were passing Proficiency and accessing the academic curricula. In his report for 1905, he gave notice of his intention to reform the ‘free place’ system:

it is doubtful whether the conditions on which free places are granted do not err on the easy side. In the course of inspection I have seen pupils that have qualified for free places by gaining certificates of proficiency, who seem unable to cope with the work of the secondary school, and are accordingly deriving very little benefit from it. To a slight extent this may be due to the fact that the secondary schools have not all quite accommodated themselves to the new conditions; but in most cases it is probably that the boys and girls referred to would be better employed in learning a trade, or in training themselves for domestic life, extending their general education and beginning the special preparation for their life work by attending continuation and technical classes in the evening.

In an effort to quell the critics and under the guise of maintaining ‘standards’, the government amended the Proficiency regulations in 1905, raising the criteria of the certificate and with it the difficulty of the examination. Such action indicated the Government’s concern to streamline education in the direction of making academic schooling more efficient so that only the so-called ‘able’ could access and benefit from an academic post-primary education.

75 Ibid.
76 R. Openshaw. et.al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, pp. 196-197; G. Lee, “Open The Doors: Unbar The Doors: The development of free place legislation and its effects upon Otago Boys’ High School in the years between 1900 and 1905”, M.Ed. Thesis. Dunedin: University of Otago, 1983, pp. 129-130. Lee notes that “These critics believed firmly that the efficiency of secondary schools would be impaired if they were filled with many pupils. They argued it was “very questionable” if the throwing open to primary school pupils of the high schools was going to be the benefit many seem to think.”
THE 1904 INTRODUCTION OF THE COMPETENCY EXAMINATION

Introduced by Hogben in 1904, the Competency Examination was widely regarded as a kind of “failed Proficiency” test as it was devised to cater for those students who were unable to cope with the “academic fare” offered at most secondary schools. It promised successful candidates a free place for two years at either their local technical school, or, in practical non-academic courses at any post-primary school. Unlike the Proficiency Examination which provided access to academic curricula, those candidates who passed with only Competency were excluded from free academic education in both secondary and district high schools. Supported by both the Competency and the Proficiency Certificates, the free place system flourished as children who had previously been excluded from post-primary education began to stay longer at school in an attempt to win Proficiency. From this point on the examination served a dual function - not only did it provide free access to higher education but it was also a marketable credential by which to gain employment.

Educational efficiency thus became a paramount concern in the working of post-primary access provisions. From the Government’s point of view, there were important economic advantages to be gained if a larger proportion of students sat and passed Competency rather than the Proficiency Examination. If fewer candidates won Proficiency, less money would have to be spent on providing academic ‘free places’ in secondary schools and the exclusiveness of an academic post-primary education would be maintained, promoting its scarcity as a market commodity. Furthermore, people schooled at the higher

---


81 Ibid., p. 196.

82 The free place bridge from primary to post-primary education also reflected the assumed social status of the three types of institutions - the secondary, the district and the technical schools. Primarily it was the secondary schools which were accorded with the role of specialists in academic schooling. The district high schools had a partial claim to this function while the technical high schools had, in theory, no faculty to teach the valuable academic syllabus.


84 D. McKenzie, “The Proficiency Examination 1930-35: A Political Controversy”, Political Issues In New Zealand Education, J. Codd, R. Harker and R. Nash, eds., (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1990): 197-198. Essentially it was hoped that more students would opt to sit the Competency test, which in turn would
levels in practical subjects - for example, agricultural studies - would add to national growth and individual prosperity.\textsuperscript{85} Abstract, academic knowledge was of limited worth in an agriculturally-based country the size of New Zealand and in so far as national progress was concerned, educating every child in academic work was clearly inefficient.\textsuperscript{86} Accordingly, the introduction of Competency and the raising of the Proficiency standards illustrated an adherence to an efficiency doctrine in the name of personal and social betterment. The promotion of national progress and prosperity required a subservience to educational efficiency such that in the post-primary arena, equality of opportunity was translated to mean that not every ambitious pupil would have access to the academic curricula. Essentially, learners not only had to be ‘able’ - that is, ‘able’ to benefit from the opportunity - but also they had to be adjudged capable of sharing their wisdom with the community.

The reality of this situation was made clear in many ways, particularly in the area of girls’ schooling. Nationwide, girls who passed the Proficiency Examination experienced unequal access to the same educative curricula relative to that of their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{87}

For women, the social mores and values demanded that their place was in the home as relieve the Government of the unexpected economic burden which had arisen as a result of the popularity of the free-place scheme and Proficiency Examination.

\textsuperscript{85} H. Roth, George Hogben. A Biography, Christchurch: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1952, p. 125. Commentators of the day claimed that, in this instance, there were lessons to be learnt from European experience - that practical and/or manual instruction would make people “more efficient in their several callings, give them a wider outlook on the world, and therefore make them better citizens”

\textsuperscript{86} G.D Lee, “Open The Doors: Unbar The Doors: The development of free place legislation and its effects upon Otago Boys’ High School in the years between 1900 and 1905”, M.Ed. Thesis, Dunedin: University of Otago, 1983, p. 128. This idea had been expressed in the popular press even in 1902 - two years before the introduction of the Competency test - when in the name of educational efficiency, Reverend A. Cameron stated, “It is no longer enough that the professional man be educated, the rank and file must share the privilege...we have fashioned our schools after the pattern of the schools of a past generation...we must set ourselves to shape our secondary schools according to our needs, and to provide for the classical, the commercial and the technical as far as possible” ; R. Openshaw. et.al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, pp. 103-105. Hogben also echoed similar sentiments in 1903 when he responded to the lack of popularity of rural subjects in the rural localities saying, “In several instances small country towns right in the heart of rich dairying or agricultural districts have sought to establish not a single class of subjects bearing on country pursuits...which is almost as reasonable as for an intending traveller to Persia to study Chinese”. Four years later he stated, “In the large towns there seems room...for something else besides the secondary school. We want another form of secondary school in the shape of a day technical school...There is still the weakness - I am sorry I must say it - that we let in some who will not get so much benefit from attendance at the secondary schools as if they went to work and attended the...technical schools. That is the proper place for a good many of them”.

\textsuperscript{87} A. Jones. et.al., Myths and Realities: Schooling in New Zealand, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, p. 37. As Fry has argued, while there was “concern that girls should not be disadvantaged in competition with boys...the academic opportunities provided to them were not identical. The home science requirements acted as a reminder that all girls were expected to look to their vocation as home makers whatever other ambitions they might entertain.”
wives and mothers. These common expectations were transplanted into the educational arena so that “the curriculum…could be made more directly functional to the adult life roles that future citizens would occupy”.88 This meant that in many schools the curriculum was not only framed around a girl’s perceived talent but also her gender, where even if she was subject to placement in one of several academic classes, each with its own distinctive post-primary curricula, the emphasis of each always centred upon schooling in ‘womanly qualities’.89

This point is exemplified well in an examination of the organisation of three distinct courses at Christchurch Girls’ High School, which were designed after the 1903 Act took effect. These courses “had a tripartite classification with no parity of esteem”.90 The highest was the University and teachers’ curriculum which schooled the most ‘able’ girls in “arithmetic, algebra, geography, English, Botany or physiology, history or elementary heat, Latin and French”.91 By comparison, the second course was designed for those intending to find work mainly as office secretaries and therefore concentrated on education in commercial subjects. The third course, neatly titled “the home life course”,92 maintained a general curriculum, focusing primarily on those subjects which were deemed the most suitable for girls of ‘ordinary’ ability. Inequality of access to all school subjects was evident as each of these courses focused only upon those subjects deemed appropriate for females to study, excluding Greek, Latin and calculus.93

88 R. Openshaw. et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 100; NZPD, 1877, Vol 25, p. 218. As earlier Parliamentary debates reflect, this idea was not a new one, the politician Tole made this point clear - “their education should include…sewing…cooking and washing. The consequence of this omission in the primary education of girls is that ‘the food of the householder is unsavoury and indigestible and at the same time unthrifty, while the whole menage has that character of untidiness and discomfort that often drives the husband to the pothouse.”

89 A. Jones. et al., Myths and Realities: Schooling in New Zealand, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, p. 37. Tennant succinctly argues this point, women’s education was not only directed to enhance their role as mother and wife but also to subtly promote female “scientific and technical ineptitude” thereby constraining their future opportunities, life choices and potential roles in the labour force.


91 Ibid.

92 Ibid. Commercial subjects included shorthand typing, book-keeping, commercial arithmetic and geography. The home-life curriculum included courses in sewing, dress-cutting, cooking English, botany, elementary algebra and French.

93 Ibid.
In this way, efficiency doctrines influenced the educational opportunities of even those girls adjudged ‘able’ by the State. Girls, it was thought, would never be politicians, architects, or plumbers, and as such had no need to be schooled in ‘masculine’ type studies. Such an idea was not surprising in view of the hysterical social element which linked national morality, racial preservation, youth delinquency and family stability directly to women, and in turn, to the education of girls which was regarded as a potent instrument of social progress. As one Australian commentator noted in 1912,

'[t]he home is the centre round which the national life flows, and in maintaining the efficiency and comfort of the home we ensure the well-being and safety of the race. The ‘house-mother’ is the one being upon whom depends the efficiency of the home. She is the national guardian and defender of the home, as man is of the State. Surely, then, it is little to demand that every woman shall be given during her youthful days some opportunity of learning about those things she most of all needs to know - home-making and child-rearing - some training which shall prepare her for the hard work and heavy responsibilities of this her highest sphere; for, after all, wifehood and motherhood are the highest and holiest destiny of woman.'

Consequently, as in Australia, girl’s education in New Zealand took on a distinctly political hue as the task of educating women became inextricably linked to their assumed future roles of wife and mother. Equality of access to curriculum subjects was moulded by socio-political considerations wherein many educationists believed that girls should be schooled in those subjects not only relevant to their destined life role but also advantageous for the welfare of the labour force and indeed, the future well-being of society.

---

94 D. Deacon, “Taylorism in the Home: The Medical Profession, the Infant welfare Movement and the Deskilling of Women”, The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol. 21. (July 1985): 164-166; R. Fry, It’s Different For Daughters, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985, pp. 81-82. In 1901, a Dunedin eye doctor Lindo Ferguson expressed this as medical opinion when he stated, “Injudicious education many render them unfit to fill their part that nature has destined for them”. Ferguson advocated the an academic and overly-physical curriculum would do girls, and indeed, the nation no good given that, “In the great battle of survival of the fittest, whether our race is to figure as a strong, healthy nation, or as a weedy, neurotic, decadent one, depends very largely on the stamina of the mothers of the future, and it may be that the battle will be won on the playgrounds of our girls’ schools”.


This movement was supported by Hogben, a staunch proponent of educational efficiency, although he did bow to the overwhelming egalitarian support for educational equality for the 'able', regardless of their gender by not attempting to ban those girls 'fit' for academic work from all higher status studies. That said, however, Hogben made his thoughts on the subject clear when he stated that, "the safest and best guide to a true coordination of studies is secured by bringing the instruction into close relation with the facts of life that immediately surround the pupil."  

Since conventional wisdom suggested that the over-education of girls might cause them psychological and/or physiological damage and in view of the growing public concern over moral and social decay, schooling girls in the art of domesticity seemed to provide an easy solution to this perceived problem. As Oliver has noted, the most significant state initiative to combat national decline during this period was the growth of ‘girls’ subjects’ in schools - domestic science and homecraft.

The nature of girls’ education was influenced by other social developments too. The establishment of Plunket, a voluntary organisation for the schooling of women in mothercraft, was an example of this. Founded in 1907 by Doctor Truby King, this society worked to promote better education in health and house-keeping matters for young and future mothers, underpinned by King’s philosophy that, “Studies for girls should be chiefly directed to domestic management and economy, to physiology and hygiene which would be far more useful than a smattering of French, algebra or Euclid.” With medical science on his side, King and his associate Batchelor launched an attack upon girls in academia,

---

99 Ibid., p. 108.
100 R.J. Bates and J.A. Codd, eds., Theory and Practice In New Zealand Education, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1980, pp. 108-109. In 1867, for example, Spender suggested that too much intellectual stimulation could cause sterility in women, impacting on the development of their reproductive system. He also proposed that over-educating girls might have detrimental effects upon the health of any children they might have in the future, which in turn, would negatively influence the development of a healthy and prosperous nation.
arguing that healthy, happy families were not born out of any subservience to long and difficult academic studies:

In the education of women we want far more rest; far less pressure. We do not want the total sum of the mental tasks to be anything like they are now. In other words, insofar as we can introduce matters concerned with home-life, we shall be giving an enormous benefit to the women, and perceptively to the race.\(^\text{103}\)

They claimed that in order to “save the children”\(^\text{104}\) one had to “restrict the women”\(^\text{105}\) from partaking in this kind of academic work and instead promote “the perfect fulfilment of the natural calls of motherhood”\(^\text{106}\) through social and educational change. This argument was especially appealing in an era where increased concerns over women’s fertility and New Zealand’s population growth were becoming more apparent.\(^\text{107}\) Essentially it stemmed from the idea that good mothers would contribute to lower mortality rates amongst infants, stop problem-youth from creating trouble in the community, and minimise incidents of alcoholism in their sons and husbands. Training girls to be better mothers and wives, it was alleged, would benefit the whole community by reducing the time and effort health officials, police, teachers and others had to devote to sick or dying babies, troubled teens and boozed people. In other words, it would reduce social and economic waste.\(^\text{108}\)

Accordingly, the power of efficiency doctrines to influence girls schooling was borne not only out of developments in the education sector but also from concerns within the wider social arena such as those addressed by the establishment of Plunket. Aligned with the thoughts of many policy-makers, King’s philosophy appeared to offer the perfect

---

\(^{103}\) R.J. Bates and J.A. Codd, eds., *Theory And Practice In New Zealand Education*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1980, p. 108. King made this statement in 1914 when he was addressing the Eugenics Education Conference.


\(^{105}\) Ibid.


\(^{107}\) W.H. Oliver, “The Origins and Growth of the Welfare State”, *Social Welfare And New Zealand Society*, A.D. Trlin, ed., (Wellington, Methuen, 1977): 9. So huge was the degree of social angst over the decline in New Zealand’s population that Seddon sought to ban the sale of contraceptives.

\(^{108}\) J.B. Condliffe *The Welfare State in New Zealand*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959, pp. 286-287. The emergence of other organisations such as The Society for the Protection of Women and Children also reflected a growing social concern for the welfare of children and those of the weaker sex.
solution to many national and population problems and the idea of schooling people for their future life roles to ensure social stability and indeed progress was soon transferred to other educational arenas. The growth of technical institutions exemplified this point.

THE EXPANSION OF THE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOLS

The movement to slot pupils into courses commensurate with their aptitudes, abilities and future life roles was not confined to the education of girls.109 The growth in the number of technical high schools after 1908 also illustrated this efficacious course. Designed to provide a curriculum based around non-academic work, the technical high schools were expected to equip many "short-stay, practically-minded pupils"110 for their future manual, vocational roles. Masterminded by Hogben, the development of technical education appeared to be integral to national progress since these schools promised to produce competent students who would be better able to adjust to and work effectively in the world of paid manual work. With greater industrialisation in the New Zealand workplace, the level of production outputs became reliant on the technical know-how of workers,111 and with more people flooding into the cities in search of employment opportunities,112 this vision of practical urban schooling became especially attractive for it seemed to provide a solution to many of the new social issues which had arisen as a result of these changes. Technical schooling trained young citizens and future workers to take their part in contributing to steady and sustainable economic growth. Consequently, under the auspices of Hogben, the


111 T. Brooking, "Economic Transformation", The Oxford History of New Zealand, W.H. Oliver and B.R. Williams, eds., (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1981): 233, 246-247; H.R.G. Mason, Education Today and Tomorrow, Wellington: Department of Education, 1945, p. 34. As Mason intimates, technical schools were appropriate institutions to provide this 'know-how' since these schools specialised in trade courses, metalwork, woodwork, engineering and agricultural studies for the boys and domestic cookery, home science and housewifery for the girls.

technical high schools were marketed to the public as institutions that guaranteed future individual prosperity and, indeed, communal success.\textsuperscript{113}

Importantly too, the introduction of technical schooling appealed to the cultural egalitarian value system of New Zealanders as it appeared to offer the non-academic or practically-inclined child control over his/her own destiny by offering courses in advanced trades, commerce and, for the girls, studies in home-science.\textsuperscript{114} Like the ‘academic’ child, practically-oriented students were also subject to a form of equal educational opportunity since they too were able to study a field of interest thought to be most relevant to their own ‘capacities’. By establishing technical schools, pupils considered fit for manual work were now (like the academic children) to be trained by the State. It was also educational efficiency at its finest since it preserved the exclusiveness of academic institutions, by preventing the unnecessary overlapping of work between the academic secondary, district and technical high schools (via the provision of differentiated curricula) at the same time as acknowledging the different talents of individuals by offering ‘practical’ studies to short-stay pupils.\textsuperscript{115}

For Hogben this seemed to provide an educational blueprint for both national and international success. His trip to the heartland of educational efficiency (the United States of America) had clearly influenced him greatly. Influenced by American educational philosophies and practices that were designed to prevent individuals and the State from wasting time, money and effort, efficiency proponents began to “construct an adequate curriculum...to match students to their future life roles, and to determine the knowledge and skills that were required to perform those roles effectively”.\textsuperscript{116} So strong was Hogben’s

\textsuperscript{113} R. Openshaw, et.al., \textit{Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History}, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 105; L. Moss, “American Influences on New Zealand Education 1840-1945”, \textit{The Impact of American Ideas on New Zealand’s Educational Policy, Practice and Thinking}, D. Philips, G. Lean and G. McDonald, eds., (Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1989): 38-39. Hogben had what Moss described as an “almost prophetic admiration for what he called the American ideal of social efficiency” wherein it was claimed that dividing and grouping pupils according to their skills and abilities would yield massive benefits to both the individual and the State


belief that New Zealand could learn much from the American way of schooling that upon his return to New Zealand he also aimed to minimise ‘pupil wastage’ by promoting an education system that attempted to prepare students of varying abilities for different social and economic roles.117 As Faulds has suggested, Hogben’s concern to preserve standards, to prevent ‘pupil wastage’ and to be prudent with taxpayer funds were paramount considerations in educational developments during this period.118

However, it should be noted that Hogben’s capacity to develop and promote three different types of post-primary systems - the academic secondary, district high and technical high schools - was made possible only through prior social mediation wherein public demand, rather than Hogben’s own express wishes, consistently shaped the final nature of educational expansion. For example, his proposal that composite courses be developed at the secondary schools where the educational needs of all students would be fulfilled by differentiated curricula failed because many parents who had themselves been excluded from elite academic studies wanted something more for their children than mere manual or vocational instruction.119 With academic education widely regarded as being the hallmark of higher education - that is, the academic post-primary schools could provide youth with access to valuable qualifications such as the Junior Civil Service and Matriculation Examinations - parents rejected vocational subjects in the belief that such studies could do little to enhance their children’s social mobility or provide better work opportunities with

117 W.L. Renwick, “The Further Off From England”, *The Impact of American Ideas on New Zealand’s Educational Policy, Practice and Thinking*, D.Philips, G.Lealand and G.McDonald, eds., (Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1989): 17; J. Wallace, “Secondary Education”, *New Zealand Education Today*, F.W.Mitchell, ed., (Wellington, A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1968): 93. It was in this regard that Hogben addressed delegates at the 1908 Secondary Schools Conference. “He spoke of European thoroughness, of the German emphasis on the mother tongue and the development of powers of expression; he mentioned the succinct methods of expression in Italian schools but stated that he believed American methods with their increased emphasis on initiative were more suitable for New Zealand. The American emphasis on English modern history, freer mathematics, newer methods of teaching science, the improvement of social efficiency, the view of the school as a part of life not as a preparatory experience for life, were all, he thought, more applicable to New Zealand where the ease of access from the primary schools to universities was to become the keynote of its egalitarian principle in education.”


greater financial security.120 This point was further exemplified in 1908 when financial incentives were offered to those secondary schools that included science and manual instruction in their curriculum. Some of these schools did develop subjects like physics and chemistry but owing to parental demand for an academic curriculum and, in part, the school’s wish to maintain their academic exclusiveness, these subjects soon came to be included under the examination umbrella and thus became inextricably linked to the demand and indeed the race for qualifications.121

THE EXPANSION OF THE RURAL DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

Undeterred, Hogben turned his attention to the rural district high schools which had experienced a five-fold growth in enrolments between 1898 and 1914.122 Aware of the short-stay nature of many of these students and convinced that an academic curriculum was unsuitable for the practically-minded majority, Hogben set about planning a syllabus which he believed would meet the needs and conditions of the rural community. In 1909, he suggested that the district high schools should provide subjects like building instruction, “farm economics, agricultural science, and dairying”123 for the boys and housewifery, cooking and hygiene for the girls.124 However, like the secondary schools, not even monetary inducements could compel parents and teachers to endorse the scheme because rural school teachers, many of whom were products of the academic secondary schools, were suspicious of a new curriculum not yet firmly established or understood. They remained content to teach the well-known academic subjects and thereby perpetuate the importance of the established education system.125 Rural parents realised that to encourage their children to take ‘practical’, non-academic courses would be to deny them the

120 Ibid., p. 103.
121 A.E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 119.
122 Ibid.
124 R. Openshaw et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, pp. 107-108. This suggestion also reflected a component of the efficiency movement which claimed that subjects taught were to be differentiated on the basis of one’s sex, thus making for harmonious and efficient gender relations in society.
educational opportunities that the town-folk had and so severely limit their chances of social mobility, status and financial security.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover, given that the Matriculation Examination prescriptions contained only academic subjects - for example, foreign languages and mathematics - it was hardly surprising then that practical, non-academic subjects were not popular with rural people who wanted the same educational opportunities as their urban-based contemporaries had.\textsuperscript{127}

Prior to this response, Hogben had

refused to sanction the creation of technical day schools outside the four main centres, hoping even yet that the existing secondary...[and district]...schools would make for adequate provision for their short-course pupils and for others for whom the...[academic]...syllabus was unsuitable.\textsuperscript{128}

However, the outright refusal of both the district high and secondary schools to adjust their offerings to take account of non-academic pupils pressed Hogben to establish technical high schools in 1908.\textsuperscript{129} Hogben's response reflected his commitment to an efficiency agenda because it equated the educational opportunities of pupils with the idea of individual suitability and fitness in such a way that the technical high schools could flourish under the egalitarian mantle of hard-work, justice and fair-play. However, as the technical high schools continued to expand, their students also began to demand instruction in many of the courses being provided at the secondary and district high schools.\textsuperscript{130} As McKenzie has suggested,

\[\text{[i]n spite of Hogben's planning, 'credentialism' soon overtook a substantial sector of the technical school system as well. For this, it was the peculiar structure of New Zealand society that was primarily responsible. The heartland of that day lay not in}\]

\textsuperscript{126} R. Openshaw, et.al., \textit{Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History}, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 103. As Openshaw et.al. notes, rural people and teaching professionals remained committed to and supportive of academic curricula in the district high schools.


\textsuperscript{128} A.E. Campbell, \textit{Educating New Zealand}, Wellington: Department for Internal Affairs, 1941, pp. 120-121.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.

the cities but in the intermediate and small towns, and these constituted a sector which was loud in its demands for equality of educational opportunity. These demands could be most economically satisfied in the intermediate centres by establishing post-primary schools which provided both academic and technical courses.  

Technical high school pupils, it seems, did not want to be excluded from the opportunity to enter in the all important examination-credential race. And what did they have to lose? Parents and pupils were only too aware of the inferior reputation cast on the technical schools by the other students, families and post-primary institutions, especially since Competency was the only qualification needed to gain a free place. Indeed, technical school pupils were frequently reminded of their relative subordinate status in a chant sung by their secondary neighbours: “With their hob nailed boots and the unwashed neck, They don’t come here they go to the Tech”. Those enrolled at the technical schools also began to demand instruction in academic subjects in the belief that these were a passport to higher examinations and, if successful, to increased social mobility, work opportunities and financial security. As Campbell has noted, the expansion of technical schools was viewed by Hogben with considerable dismay. They were free to teach almost anything they chose…[technical schools had expanded]…their functions until they overlapped those of the secondary schools…and whether from misplaced ambitions or from mistaken ideas of what was of real…value to their students they...[became]…prone to the very disease of...[academic]…bookishness and formalism that they had been designed to cure.

Hogben was thus compelled to question the efficacy of his own educational architecture, wherein many pupils demanded and often received access to elite academic studies and highly valuable qualifications. His disappointment over the expansion of

---


132 It is important to note here that a pass in the Proficiency Examination was still required if pupils intended to participate in academic courses provided by the technical high schools.

133 J.C. Dakin, Education in New Zealand, Auckland: Leonard Fullerton, 1973, p. 27.


135 A.E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 127.
academic departments in the technical high schools and the considerable growth of these faculties in the district high schools was plainly evident since the operative ability of his scheme depended upon most 'ordinary' pupils being schooled in either rural or trades-based studies. As Faulds noted,

> [t]he New Zealand public was well aware of the economic value of even a modicum of secondary education, and the technical schools responded to public demand by offering not only practical courses, but others approximating to those of the academic secondary schools.

In spite of Hogben's obvious disapproval, the dominance of egalitarianism in the educational arena worked to ensure that the academically 'able' had virtually unfettered access to the academic curriculum. Matters came to a head in 1906 at Te Aute College, a Maori boys' secondary school, when pupils refused to succumb to official Departmental pressure to become educationally efficient by taking those subjects thought most relevant to their race and future life course. Resisting being taught 'practical skills... for living in their own rural communities', these pupils sought to protect their right of access to the academic curriculum and the Matriculation Examination, thereby assuring future social and geographic mobility. Accordingly, they refused to take non-academic subjects and rejected Hogben's plan to eliminate 'waste' in schooling. Although it is evident that this debate was compounded by racial issues, one constant component remained clear: regardless of Hogben's intent, the quest for educational and social efficiency through the expansion of technical and agricultural schooling did not, at least in the public mind, supplant the importance of the academic curriculum and its associated higher qualifications. As Lee has commented,


138 R. Openshaw et al., *Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 53. Hogben was convinced that Maori were well-suited to manual labour and thus ripe for the opportunity to partake in 'trade-training'. As Openshaw et al. note, "So concerned was Hogben with making education at Te Aute 'less academic' and 'more practical' that he advocated allocating eight hours per week to agriculture and woodwork instruction, and 11 hours for the remaining six subjects - English (six hours); Geography, Civics, Health, Arithmetic (including Bookkeeping) and Drill, one hour each."

139 Ibid.
Hogben, it seems, had seriously underestimated the intense demand for rural schools to provide academic courses leading to examination credentials and enhanced employment opportunities. It was a mistake that he was to repeat in the case of Te Aute College.\textsuperscript{140}

In this way, the demand for equality of educational access to academic studies overtook Hogben’s wishes and produced ‘consumer’ resistance to his efforts to educate and train pupils for their effective future life roles.

Hogben now sought a compromise position: he decided to endorse “multi-lateral schooling”\textsuperscript{141} believing that this offered the best and most effective way to fund the post-primary educational sector. Instead of supporting differential curricula in both the technical and district high schools, Hogben now suggested providing differentiated curricula within a single school. That said, however, he remained committed to the principles of educational efficiency and as late as 1910 voiced concern that too many students were enrolled in academic studies of little real benefit to their future working lives. To this end, he observed that

\[\text{there seems to be no reason to fear that a thorough mental training could not be obtained as well through the medium of a vocational course as from a course based on old-fashioned lines...If the programmes of our secondary schools were adjusted in this direction probably there would be a greater inducement for parents to keep their boys and girls longer at school; at all events, there would be less excuse if they did not do so.}\textsuperscript{142}

Although compelled to extol the value of composite courses in the post-primary sector, Hogben remained convinced that his educational philosophy was the superior route to social and economic progress in New Zealand. Nevertheless, his efforts to eliminate educational ‘waste’ were not confined to this arena.


THE REFORM OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Changes were also afoot in the primary school sector. Virtually every alteration on this front seemed to echo the recurrent themes of standardisation and/or efficiency in the primary school curriculum. Criticism from parents, employers and the New Zealand Educational Institute regarding the undesirable effects of examination pressure upon the youth had prompted the introduction of new regulations in 1894 that gave head teachers the right to examine (and promote) children below the Standard Three level.143 Such a move also demonstrated that the Government was concerned to combat the sterility of assessment practice amongst those in the lower primary school levels.144 By 1899, the policy was further extended to allow teachers to examine children in Standards Three, Four and Five. Such an extension was promoted by Hogben as being educationally efficient because examinations...scarcely ever do more than test the knowledge possessed without reference to the method of acquiring it. Every examination from without interferes to a certain extent with education. The difficulty often is, with so many claims imposed by examinations, to get any real education at all...[accordingly]...the best results can be got in a school only by allowing to the principal full liberty in the matter of text-books, organization, and methods. The principal can allow that same liberty to individual teachers so far as is consistent with the proper conduct of the several classes.145

Under the guise of educational efficiency, primary school classrooms were to become freed from the constricting influence of formal examinations which formerly had been administered by the primary school inspector. However, it is important to note that the Department also operated as a safeguard giving the external inspectors the power to examine the whole school in cases of marked inefficiency.

Eliminating potential and wasteful educational mistakes was also a prime consideration in Hogben’s revision of the primary school syllabus. Detailed syllabus prescriptions were issued to primary school teachers in 1904 in the hope that the “aims and

143 This was one outcome of the first conference of school inspectors which was held in New Zealand in 1894.
objectives''146 of primary schooling would better be understood by teachers and that school lessons might be bought closer to the everyday world of the pupil. It seems that the role of the school “was no longer to be the imparting of the maximum amount of knowledge, but the careful development and direction of the child’s natural activities and powers, and the building up of character”.147 This new philosophy of education was, as the educator Allan noted,

a vast improvement on the arid, bookish and abstract syllabus of 1878 which it had replaced...it...offered a better opportunity for a more enlightened form of teacher preparation...[and attempted]...to cater for the personal growth and physical welfare of... students.148

The changes all reflected an adherence to efficiency principles because the elimination of ‘waste’ in schooling necessarily required that the abilities, aptitudes and talents of pupils be known to the teacher and accommodated within the education system. Moreover, students at the primary level were also to be educated in the areas of “civics, morals and health”149 - a policy that neatly meshed with efficiency doctrines which proposed that an educated and healthy nation would contribute substantially towards economic growth and social stability. The introduction in 1907 of the School Journal also signalled the Department’s commitment to the furtherance of school efficiency. The School Journal systematically exerted “direct...[and national]...influence on what went on in the classroom...[and the]...methods of teaching.”150 An earlier example of the efficiency philosophy was to be found in the Public School Teachers’ Salaries Act of 1901 which provided teachers with a unified pay scale and

---


148 J.S. Allan, “Teacher Education”, New Zealand Education Today, F.W. Mitchell, ed., (Wellington, A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1968): 123-124. When this article was published J.S. Allan was the Principal of the Hamilton Teachers’ College and a Member of the National Advisory Council on the Training of Teachers.


superannuation scheme. Looking after the educators as well as those learning in the schools was thus a central plank in Hogben's primary school reforms.

Hogben continued to advocate for a system designed to acquire maximum efficiency despite numerous complaints that many teachers found this new scheme "highly prescriptive" and "cumbersome." Moreover, the growing number of pupils going on to higher (primary and post-primary) educational levels, coupled with the continued emphasis placed upon examination success, meant that Hogben's conviction that those pupils exposed to curricula with which they could readily identify with would better be able to develop their talents remained a highly contestable 'efficiency-equality' issue.

THE 1910 EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Debate over the aims, objectives, purpose and indeed the cost of education raged in Parliament for some years after the (1904) primary and (1903-1908) post-primary school reforms. Questions surrounding the relationship between the primary and post-primary school curriculum and its suitability for a rapidly growing number of students of different abilities and interests began again to be voiced. The Government responded by convening a General Education Conference to examine "the co-ordination of the several parts of the education system in New Zealand". Not surprisingly the promotion of liberal education policy under the banner of educational progress meant that the necessity to maximise efficiency in schools became the central focus of the Conference.

Peter Goyen's (the Chief Inspector for the Otago Education Board) reaction to the massive increase in students going on to the higher post-primary levels exemplified this point. He suggested that in order to ensure an adequate return for the huge sum of money

---


153 Ibid., p. 100; C.E. Beeby, The Biography Of An Idea, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1992, p. 139. This may have been, as Beeby noted, because Hogben failed to consult teachers, he "wrote the 1904 primary syllabus himself, with little running contact with the profession".

spent on education, night school (i.e. - continuation classes,) should be made compulsory for those school leavers under seventeen years of age.\textsuperscript{155} Others like Charles Bevan-Brown (the Headmaster of Christchurch Boys’ High School),\textsuperscript{156} continued to support the call for greater economy in education by declaring that the standard of Proficiency was too low. He claimed that many pupils who qualified for a proficiency certificate “were not capable of returning adequate value to the state”\textsuperscript{157} by virtue of their being entirely ‘unfit’ for academic studies. These pupils, Bevan-Brown concluded, would better be advised to take up some form of manual, pre-vocational training, “If a child had gone through a primary-school course, was of good character, and had done honest work…[I would say]…‘You may go to a technical school or a district high school, and continue your education.”\textsuperscript{158}

With the elimination of waste in education being such a central concern to Conference participants, the debate shifted to a consideration of the overlap between the three types of post-primary institutions and an awareness of the problem faced by those pupils who remained but a short time at school.\textsuperscript{159} It is not, contended Bevan-Brown,

to the advantage of the State to educate so many children free, possibly a third of whom hardly could be said to profit by secondary education as such. They often drifted off into book-keeping, which it was not really the province of a secondary school, as such, to teach.\textsuperscript{160}

Alfred Marshall (the Director of the Dunedin Technical School) added further weight to this argument by suggesting that many of the pupils who passed Proficiency had originally not intended studying academic subjects. The fact that they had passed an examination which many alleged was too easy was the sole reason many of them proceeded to academic

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid. Peter Goyen stated “an education that terminates at fourteen yields a very inadequate return in the shape of increased national efficiency…[there is]…one efficient remedy - namely, the establishment of continuation classes at which attendance shall be compulsory to the age of seventeen or eighteen”.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 19. Joseph Firth (representing the Wellington College secondary school) and Peter Goyen (representing inspectors in the Otago district) also supported Bevan-Brown’s contention.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 18.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 25. Discussion surrounding the issue of short-stay pupils included the idea of a parental guarantee (or monetary bond) mooted at the Conference. However it was quickly discarded in favour of the equality of opportunity ideal, in view of the fact that such legislation might prevent deserving children from getting an appropriate education.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 18.
The message was clear: the ‘best’ education was one which reflected individuals’ future needs. It was this stance which appealed to the utilitarian Hawke’s Bay Inspector, Henry Hill who suggested that the circumstances of the schools and the types of scholars attending these institutions demanded simple action - “the kind of work that boys and girls... do in the primary school should be as such as to prepare them to fulfil their life’s duties”. Or maybe, asserted John Howell (the Director of the Christchurch Technical School), one might consider the vocational destination of individual pupils and educate them accordingly. Hogben went further and warned that since more “than half of our industrial workers... [are]... concerned with agriculture” they could no longer “neglect that branch of study in the way it had been neglected by the farmers themselves in the past”. In terms of New Zealand’s heavy dependence on agriculture for its economic survival, schooling rural pupils in their future life’s work appeared to provide the best way to support individual potentialities as well as promoting national economic progress. Hogben therefore assumed that in education (as in life) State and individual needs were one and the same, and not mutually exclusive.

With issues such as this uppermost in their minds, conference delegates began to look at ways to improve the mechanics of the New Zealand education system. What was needed, Bevan-Brown alleged, was,

some kind of sorting-machine which would sort the capacity of the children, so that...[we]...would be able to say, “It would be to the advantage of the State to educate this child from the primary school to the university.”...[We]...must have some method of sorting. At present it...[is]...by the rough method of examination”.

---

161 Ibid., pp. 17-20. Hill (Inspector for the Hawkes Bay district), Hogben and Braik (Inspector for the Wanganui district) were amongst the delegates who claimed that the standard of a Proficiency pass was too low.

162 Ibid., p. 20.

163 Ibid., p. 37.

164 Ibid., p. 18.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid., p. 23.
The best education system depended not only on an adequate selection system, however, but also upon an understanding of the educational needs of those at the industrial ‘coal-face’. Herbert Cousins (the Headmaster of Auckland Normal Primary School), alluded to this idea by arguing that teachers who remained outside of the equation (in terms of their understanding of the systems changing requirements) could easily ruin efforts to co-ordinate primary and post-primary schooling. For the purposes of efficiency, he wanted to see “a…continuation of effort in…one direction”\(^{167}\) and accordingly proposed that the nature of teacher training be modified “to prevent overlapping in the work and to secure higher efficiency”\(^{168}\).

In order to make schools more effective institutions, the Conference recommended several strategies: the better co-ordination of work between the primary and post-primary arena; that all free place pupils “be supplied with a clear statement as to the avenues of further education open to them”\(^{169}\), that agricultural and science scholarships be introduced and a uniform system of assessing teachers be established. These changes, it was hoped, would encourage greater efficiencies from all within the school system by ensuring that educational provisions not only met the ‘wants’ of the community but also avoided “economic waste”\(^{170}\). In this way schools would help to guide pupils into making suitable choices from the myriad of educational opportunities that had appeared as a result of earlier educational reforms. This was a philosophy that sat nicely under the egalitarian mantle of fair-play and equality of treatment. Supporting students in this way was both *just* and *efficient* because it was a means whereby the school curriculum could be bought “into closer accordance with the requirements”\(^{171}\) of various students at the same time as it prevented “the constant duplication of cost without corresponding benefit to the paying public”\(^{172}\).

\(^{167}\) AJHR. 1910, Vol. II, E-10, p. 32. (General Education Conference)

\(^{168}\) Ibid., p. 38.

\(^{169}\) Ibid., p. 46.

\(^{170}\) Ibid., p. 6.

\(^{171}\) Ibid.

\(^{172}\) Ibid., p. 5.
THE 1912 COHEN COMMISSION

Similar sentiments were echoed two years later by the 1912 Cohen Commissioners who concluded that there were several ways in which New Zealand's education system could be improved to make it more cost-effective. With issues of equality firmly in mind, the Commissioners suggested that by unifying teacher salaries as well as some of the syllabus requirements and by refining practical school instruction the effectiveness of educational spending would vitally be enhanced. Greater co-ordination between the primary and post-primary schools coupled with a renewed emphasis upon the importance of agricultural education was expected to further eliminate educational 'waste' and thus better secure the efficient working of the school if not the social system. This appeared to be the predominant opinion of the delegates in view of the

bad habits engendered by young children of both sexes being allowed to loiter about the streets at night or gather in the neighbourhood of theatres, pictures shows, &c., at hours when they should be in their homes or in their beds...[it]...is an evil of such magnitude that if it is not coped with and minimized, the results must be disastrous to the morality of the community.173

Accordingly, the Commissioners recommended that action was urgently needed. Noting in their report that the 'chief defect' "of the present scheme of education... [was]...its tendency to make the public examinations the objective, the result being that the ranks of clerks (in the case of men) and of typists (in the case of young women) are unduly extended"174, the Commissioners proposed that the curriculum be modified to promote "the material prosperity of the people of the Dominion".175 Many of those who gave evidence to the Commission argued that this could be done by enhancing the educational significance (value) of New Zealand's agriculture and dairying industries, which would, in turn, influence pupils to choose school subjects that were relevant to these primary areas.176


174 ibid., pp. 15-16.

175 ibid., p. 16.

176 ibid., pp. 16-17. Delegates suggested that Matriculation and Junior Civil Service Examinations award more marks to subjects focusing on the 'primary industries'.
The Commissioners were not alone in their calls for a renewed emphasis upon agricultural schooling. Inspectors Browne and Issac along with the Inspector General of Schools, George Hogben, had expressed this idea in an earlier (1911) report. Assessing the efficacy of manual and technical instruction they wrote,

[a]griculture... affords a primary educational course for the development of the race. Thus, the principal object of the rural course should be to bring about a closer correlation between life and school by utilizing environment for educational and cultural purposes. At the same time the special bias given to the course of study will naturally supply elements of interest to pupils having a predilection for outdoor pursuits, and may on this account lead such ultimately to take up farming as a profession and put them in the way of attacking its problems in a scientific way. In either case the course should have the effect of inducing more of our young people to become producers instead of distributors.177

Foreshadowing the Commissioner’s recommendations, the inspectors claimed that such schooling would occur only when adequately trained teachers were paid what they were ‘worth’ - that is, paid according to the ‘value’ of their service to the State.178 Harold Trimble, Chairman of the Taranaki Education Board, must have been especially pleased with this recommendation as own his proposal to the Committee had echoed a similar kind of reasoning, akin to that now being expressed by the Cohen Report. Giving evidence to the Commission, Trimble had stated that there was a serious dearth of trained teachers...[in Taranaki]...to retain in these schools the services of the very best teachers available, the Department should...grant a salary commensurate with the importance of the school and the responsibility placed on the shoulders of the teachers...If, moreover, an education district is not in the position to obtain men with the highest qualifications, then the efficiency of education in the district must suffer in consequence...[on this point he concluded]...though there might be no monetary saving, yet there would be a gain in the efficiency of instruction.179

Such was the support for increasing teacher salaries that the delegates were moved to acknowledge that:

178 Ibid., E-12, p. 13. (The Cohen Commission)
179 Ibid., pp. 480-481.
In spite of the fact that the remuneration paid to teachers has been materially increased during the past ten years, there has been a practically unanimous demand throughout the Dominion for an increase in salaries, and it has been strongly urged that the prizes at present offered are not sufficiently numerous to attract to the profession the most promising young men in the community... In view of the high qualifications required from these teachers, and the long course of study thus entailed, it is suggested that... a Dominion scale of salaries at an increased rate for these teachers be formulated, and that in it the principle of yearly increments be established.  

The Commissioners also argued that educational efficiency for social prosperity would also be achieved by consolidating country primary and post-primary schools. Relying on the reported experiences and data from educationists overseas, a number of witnesses proposed that consolidation would both enhance the quality of schooling and significantly reduce running costs. Furthermore, from the Commissioner’s point of view, consolidation could greatly reduce the problem of subject overlap in the higher schools. Closing down district high schools in localities where course duplication was occurring in the separate education institutions and dividing the work between neighbouring technical high and academic secondary schools was thought to be an appropriate and educationally efficient solution to remedy the ‘evil’ of subject overlap. It appeared for all intents and purposes a win-win type of proposal (and it appealed to the egalitarian outlook of New Zealanders) because taxpayers money would be saved without reducing student services.

To promote the kind of philosophy wherein vocational trade and agricultural work was seen as being of equal value to academic studies, the Commissioners suggested that recognised practice certificates be awarded to apprentices taught at the Technical High Schools. Interestingly, this idea had earlier been mooted in a 1911 Inspectors Report which suggested that more money be spent to extend technical facilities to make this type of schooling a more attractive option to students.

---

180 Ibid., p. 13.
181 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
182 Ibid., p. 15.
183 Ibid. For example, student plumbers.
In light of the efficiency argument, the Commissioners also discussed ways to educate girls effectively and appropriately. Their proposals emphasised domestic science and the limiting of girls' homework and curricula requirements so as to cater to the delicate nature of girls and to aid in their preparation as future mothers and wives. These recommendations echoed those made earlier in the 1911 Inspectors’ Report wherein it was suggested that preparatory girls’ schooling benefited both the individual and the State and no more so than in the case of domestic instruction wherein dressmaking, cookery and laundry-work were taught and associated skills refined. With this in mind, inspectors Browne and Isaac wrote:

As a preparation for an introduction to home-life and its duties the value of such courses to the community cannot be over-estimated. Sufficient theoretical instruction is given to enable pupils to take up work in an intelligent manner, and to add an element of interest and dignity to what is too often regarded as menial drudgery.

According to Hogben this preparatory philosophy was applicable to the education of all children and his support for schooling to be directly related to a pupil's life experience(s) and destinations was borne in his evidence to the Cohen Commission:

By “vocational training” I mean that the subjects of the training should be chosen so that they have some bearing on the future life of the pupil. I hold that if you are going to teach the pupil in the best way, you must consider his present environment and future life... whatever shape you are going to give to instruction, it is most important that you should sustain interest by linking it with the child’s own life and experience.

It was a scheme which appeared virtually fail-safe in that it proposed to educate individual students equally along these lines. Compounded by the results of a decade of massive educational reform (1899-1909), the Cohen Commissioners Report and others commentators believed these proposals would be readily accepted by the public. However,

185 Ibid., E-12, p. 20. (The Cohen Commission) The Commission recommended that the girls curricular requirements be limited relative to that of the boys.
188 Ibid., E-12, p. 37. (The Cohen Commission)
as McKenzie et al. have explained, this was not to be: “the expectation that schools would embody traditional, conservative values... [providing access to examinations and valuable credentials]... militated against the official verdict that the proposed curricular ‘reforms’ had been bold and enlightened”.189

THE 1914 EDUCATION ACT

Disappointed with the nature of this collective response, those in positions of authority in the Education Department and in government began to contemplate a legislative remedy. The resultant Education Act of 1914 not only worked to consolidate more than a decade of school reform but also reflected increased dependency of the post-primary institutions upon the government for grants and, significantly, course prescriptions.190 In doing so, this relatively innocuous Act testified to the powerful influence of both the efficiency doctrines and efficiency educators in the New Zealand primary and post-primary education spheres. Unwilling to give way, these educationists continued to battle for a more effective, less wasteful school system which would fairly select and allocate pupils into ‘appropriate’ courses and later, career paths. However, such was their faith that the dominance of academic studies would eventually wane that it merely condemned these educators to another era of frustration. As McKenzie et al. have noted,

the willingness of the ambitious to pay the required opportunity cost...[and their]...rate of expected return...[meant that they would]....be the last people who wish to change the markers that point to success. The strength of the upwardly mobile demand will be for access rather than reform and this was something that liberal educationalists had to learn to accept as a reality of life.191

Ambitious students appeared to be cut from the same cloth as those who earlier had called for free, albeit conditional, access to the post-primary schools because they had chosen to pass over work opportunities in favour of further schooling and access to valuable academic


credentials. Educational efficiency for these pupils, as it had been for others, remained elusive. Whilst education officials stood in awe of the efficiency ideal, attempts to persuade parents to accept anything other than extended equality of access provisions (to a host of ever-growing 'able') remained unsuccessful.

With the onset of the First World War in 1914, the stability and productivity of the nation became of paramount importance so that for the time being, attention was deflected from the education to the military arena. However, the battle to achieve educational efficiency was far from over because during the next fourteen years (1915-1929), efforts to secure a better working system wherein every pupil received reasonable curriculum access, resulted in new school philosophies and practices emerging. The introduction in 1922 of junior high schools and the growing use of intelligence tests were just some of the measures employed to sustain efficiency and were promoted to the public under the pretext of extended equality of educational opportunity. Such initiatives were touted as the perfect way to fairly group, grade and guide pupils in the various education courses and in this respect they became the perfect archetype of the 'sorting machine' proposed as an ideal and 'fair' educational tool at the 1910 Education Conference and supported by Hogben. Debate over the introduction of specialist or general education courses, as well as the controversy over the institution of a common core of studies for all types of pupils, also reflected the reality that attempts to eliminate educational 'waste' and promote real educational 'equality' remained a primary goal of State educationists during the period 1915-1929. Yet, as before, proposals to implement and achieve this objective continued to be controversial. All the while, State educationists reasoned that if greater educational efficiency resulted in enhanced equality of educational opportunity, then the egalitarian public would be willing to follow a subtler form of educational differentiation. Linked to social justice and economic progress, such a policy initially seemed fail-safe. But the reality was to prove vastly different - such was the demand for academic education that vocational and technical education was not seen as being of equal worth to academic schooling. Accordingly, during the period 1915-1929, and particularly, after each successive crisis when the State attempted to limit access to the highly valued (and expensive) academic courses and to differentiate pupils on the basis of the equality of opportunity ideal, ambitious youth fought against such movements, striving instead to gain qualifications that would be most valuable to them in
their later working lives. As Chapter Three will illustrate, the reason why pupils so eagerly pursued academic studies was that they recognised that unlike the efficiency rhetoric, *State and individual interests were not one in the same, but mutually exclusive* and for this reason they tailored their studies towards the more marketable, valuable and worthwhile academic courses.
CHAPTER THREE

EXTENDING EQUALITY PROVISIONS: GUIDING AND MODERATING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS, 1915 - 1929.

The pursuit of greater educational efficiencies through the promotion of more educational opportunities did not disappear after 1914. In point of fact, the opportunities heralded by the 1903 Secondary Schools Act (and consolidated by the 1914 Education Act) appeared to demand firm directives and tighter management control because they guaranteed the entry and retention of a greater number of pupils at the higher primary and lower post-primary levels. Such was the rate of participation that government efforts to sort and develop the type of individual produced by the schools did not wane but in the name of democracy, social stability and national, economic progress merely took on a new life and were expressed through fresh educational forms.

Indeed, the period 1915 to 1929 was marked by renewed attempts to enhance economic and social efficiency through schooling. The quest to eliminate educational ‘waste’ and to improve the lot of individuals and the New Zealand economy and community was evident in the writings of many educationists and the policies pursued by the Department of Education during this period. New methods of pupil selection as well as a new type of school - the Junior High School (Intermediate) - were introduced ostensibly to cater for students with various needs and diverse abilities. Innovations to improve the efficacy of schools were also made publicly palpable since they were espoused under the guise of equality and social fraternity.

The call for greater efficiency was bolstered by the demands that war had placed on the nation. Social, political and economic involvement in the Great War (1914-1918) fostered a sense of social unity¹ and national consciousness to such an extent that it:

¹ S. Maddock, A Pictorial History of New Zealand, Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1988, p. 168. There were also socially divisive elements that arose in New Zealand as a by-product of war. Suspicion surrounded those New Zealanders of German ancestry and they were often subject to unfair treatment and abuse. Conscientious objectors were also roughly treated by New Zealand communities. Politely known as ‘shirkers’, these people were painted as cowards and as enemies of the nation and, at best, were treated to white feathers, sent in the mail to symbolise their cowardice.
accelerated most of the trends identified in early twentieth-century New Zealand society: the power of the state grew; organization became essential to survival; occupation became the key determinant of life chances and living standards; ...[and]... fertility and mortality rates continued downwards.²

Nationalism permeated virtually every aspect of the social landscape. Nowhere was this more evident than in the educational arena where teachers, for example, were compelled to take oaths of allegiance to New Zealand from 1921 and where flag raising became an indelible part of every school’s daily routine. As Openshaw has noted, in the interests of national unity, patriotism became obligatory in schools:

During the First World War... neither the... [New Zealand Educational] institute nor the teaching service had harboured many doubts about loyalty. The schools had been unashamedly mobilized for total victory. With very few exceptions, teachers had wholeheartedly accepted the inculcation of loyalty and patriotism to children as a primary responsibility... official zeal reflected in such publications as the New Zealand School Journal.

It was a philosophy which pervaded that environs for years to come. As T.B. Strong, the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools, made clear in 1919 schools still were expected to be active instruments of this patriotic policy: “What higher aim can schools have than to implant in the minds of boys and girls those principles that will lead them to become worthy citizens of a great Empire?”⁴, he asked.

War-time experiences heightened national consciousness to such an extent that it also crystallised a new sense of New Zealand’s geographic isolation. Separated from any ‘friendly force’ by miles of ocean, the protection, strength and external security of New Zealand


Zealand depended heavily upon its people.\(^5\) This realisation worked to heighten concern for the welfare and moral training of young New Zealanders. Indeed, the production of strong, healthy, civic-minded youths appeared vital if New Zealand was to allay her fears of future enemy attack. In this way education was to be the route to social and economic salvation:

Whatever else is retrenched as a result of war, education must not be touched... To do so would be to cripple our main resource for national recuperation... With the unexampled destruction of life and property entailed by war, there will come an unexampled call to make the most of the brains and hands of the coming generation, whose task it will be to replace the loss.\(^6\)

Alterations to educational policy and the school curricula mirrored this lesson. War had been the essence of true nationhood and change was needed if the rights of individuals, and of democracy itself, were to be protected from future invasion and loss. The message was clear: to rebuild a stronger, more democratic post-war society would, in view of the losses,\(^7\) be difficult, but certainly achievable if New Zealanders were united in the cause and well-organised.

HANAN’S MEMORANDUM: 1916

In terms of education, this mood was reflected as early as 1916 when Hanan, (then Minister of Education) issued a Memorandum geared to the promotion of social progress by eliminating waste in schooling. Hanan’s Memorandum is significant for it reflected not only...

---

\(^5\) W.L. Renwick, Moving Targets. Six Essays On Educational Policy, with an introductory essay by C.E. Beeby, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1986, p. xxii. As Beeby notes, both periods of war (1914-1918, 1939-1945) aroused in New Zealand society a strong sense of obligation towards the young, in both protectionist and welfaristic terms. (However it was the experience of a Second World War which changed the traditional attitude towards the ‘survival of the fittest’ mode in schools. As the New Education Fellowship Conference recognised, it was more important to repay youth for what they had lost through war than to promote academic elitism in schools.)

\(^6\) AJHR 1916, Vol. II, E-1a, p. 11. (Educational Progress 1916 New Zealand - Hanan’s Memorandum)

\(^7\) S. Maddock. A Pictorial History of New Zealand, Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1988, p. 170. Maddock claims that there were “17,000 dead, which meant that New Zealand’s losses, proportionately, were heavier than those of any other nation. Even Belgium, a major battleground and with seven times as many inhabitants, lost only 13,000.” ; T. Brooking, et.al., Milestones: Turning Points in New Zealand History, Lower Hutt: Mills Publications, 1988, p. 139. Brooking’s interpretation of the war losses adds depth to Maddock’s analysis. He writes: “New Zealand had sent over 100,000 men to serve overseas - 10 per cent of the population, a third of eligible males. The figure was exceeded in the Empire only by Britain. Although conscription had been introduced in 1916, over 70 per cent of New Zealand’s fighting men were volunteers. Altogether there were 58,014 casualties - 16,697 killed, 41,317 wounded. In the Empire only Australia’s horrific 65 per cent casualty rate exceeded New Zealand’s 59 per cent.”
a deep dedication to educational *equality* through the promotion of educational *efficiency* but also questioned the efficacy of schooling in terms of the production of good ‘fit’ workers. It was permeated with particular reverence to the philosophy of organic progressivism, wherein “the task of education was to aid the economy to function as efficiently as possible - “To make each child a better socius”, a more fit member of a complex society”.

Hanan’s Memorandum signalled his commitment to educational efficiency for social and economic advancement. He believed that schooling should be made progressive and essentially fairer by introducing

more co-ordination and economy of effort, dependent on a wholesome amount of social and national discipline, without approaching the type of regimentation and autocracy against which we are fighting...[Education]...must lead the way in a keener sense of national co-ordination and efficiency, in a readiness to abandon useless forms and practices, in a demand for a higher standard of work and of life...The whole is greater than its part.

In order to secure educational efficiency, a complete overhaul of much of the school system would be required. Reassessing the importance of the academic curriculum in the post-primary system was but one of the suggestions made by Hanan to ensure that this goal was met. Like other (international) efficiency educators, he claimed that practically-minded post-primary students ideally should be able to complete studies that were relevant to their interests and aptitudes because the State would derive no economic or social benefit from educating people in areas unrelated to their future life courses. Such ‘irrelevant’ schooling, Hanan concluded, was both futile and wasteful because it ignored the new ‘reality’ that more students, many with no real academic interest, were entering the post-primary arena.

---


9 AJHR, 1916, Vol II, E-1a, p. 2. (Educational Progress 1916 New Zealand - Hanan’s Memorandum)

10 A.G. Wirth, “Issues In the Vocational-Liberal Studies Controversy (1900-1917): John Dewey vs The Social Efficiency Philosophers”, *Education For Work*, D. Corson, ed., (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1988): 57. The American educator Snedden, for example, claimed that the ultimate aim of education was to “secure the greatest degree of efficiency.”; W.F. Connell, *A History of Education in the Twentieth Century World*, New York: Columbia University, 1980. pp. 48-51. Germany, Britain and the United States were just some of the countries involved in programmes of curriculum diversification so that the efforts of their non-academic students might not be wasted on formal studies but devoted instead to training for their future role in the world of work.
Consequently, he argued that academic schooling could no longer be regarded as being the consummate yardstick of a sound, life-equippping education:

We can surely keep that portal open for the few who need it without forcing all secondary pupils to traverse the same path. General secondary education and pre-university education cannot now be regarded as parallel... our secondary school system should be adjusted to the new conditions, so that, while encouraging and providing for the small minority of university aspirants, the very large majority should not be unfairly sacrificed on the altar of university preparation. This means that primary and secondary education must be considered as a whole, since for an ever-increasing number of pupils it should form a continuous course, which will provide for all as adequately as primary education does now up to the old limit.  

Echoing Hogben's view a decade earlier, Hanan claimed that Government funds were being wasted on providing academic services to people who had little intention of proceeding to the university. In view of the immediate national wartime crisis, this argument appeared quite persuasive. Hanan's advocacy also mirrored the arguments of American educators such as William McAndrew who suggested that schooling would be made more effective by the elimination of wasteful tasks, techniques and methods. In short this meant that pupils should be schooled in a manner so as to:

grasp the essential ideas and understand the civic organisation of their country, that they should have an adequate and sufficiently flexible general and vocational education to fit them to become useful citizens, and that, as good citizens, they should be aware of the weaknesses and strengths of their society and be prepared to help make it work as efficiently as possible. To achieve the last objective, that of advancing public welfare, pupils must be in a position eventually to act as good and efficient citizens. There must therefore be adequate opportunity to prepare for and to provide service to society.


R. Openshaw, et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand's Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 151. “However, several school principals believed that pupils not wishing to enter a New Zealand university should not be denied an opportunity to prepare for the Matriculation Examination, given that pupils' job prospects were enhanced considerably if they possessed this qualification.”

R.E. Callahan, Education And The Cult Of Efficiency, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, p. 51. Principal of Washington Irving High school, William McAndrew was just one of the many staunch American proponents of educational efficiency. In 1912 his published article “The Danger of Running a Fool Factory” urged schools to take up more cost-effective management strategies to combat a system allegedly “permeated with errors and hypocrisy”.

Against this background, Hanan’s proposal that four educational courses - i.e. academic, general, vocational, and rural studies - be better promoted to the increased and very diverse number of students entering the post-primary arena appeared very persuasive. Efficiency demanded that studies at this level be taken by students deemed capable of performing in their area of interest. Whilst he conceded that a curriculum common to all was important because “future citizens...[had]...common human possibilities and needs...[and required]...a sound basis for patriotism and desire to serve one’s country”,15 Hanan reasoned that real equality would be achieved only when “equally bright pupils...find full scope in any of the courses, and pupils in one course would not necessarily be of inferior calibre to those in any other.” 16 This, he suggested, would be possible only when the system of post-primary education was moulded directly upon that of the ‘seamless’ elementary school (philosophy), which,

with all its faults is more progressive, more in harmony with the best educational thought and with the nature and powers of children, better organised, better controlled by inspection... it is the type of education provided for the whole community, so that its universal needs and benefits constitute a claim for general concern and general study resulting in a fairly close realization of its possibilities.17

The intention was clear: whilst all ‘able’ students would be schooled in some academic work, only those wishing to proceed to the university would be educated completely in academic-type studies. Accordingly, in the general stream, the subject Latin (which was an essential element of a classical-academic education,) was to be excluded from the course prescriptions to deter pupils from being “driven into a course of study unsuited to their needs, merely to pass an examination...Matriculation ...should be used only for qualifying for University entrance and closely kindred purposes.”18

To further consolidate his proposals, Hanan asserted that the State benefited socially and economically from providing equality in vocational and rural education programmes, and in so doing catered for students of diverse abilities, interests and intentions. In wel-

15 AJHR. 1916, Vol. II, E-la, p. 4. (Educational Progress 1916 New Zealand - Hanan’s Memorandum)
16 Ibid. Hogben had made a similar claim almost a decade earlier when he had argued that academic and vocational courses were equally worthwhile and that students involved in these courses were equally worthy.
17 Ibid., p. 2.
18 Ibid., p. 5. This was a clear attempt to safeguard the Matriculation Examination as a ‘preparatory’ rather than ‘terminal’ qualification.
organised vocational streams, for example, the State would receive a return on its educational expenditure not only because trained technical workers would have "a direct effect on industrial efficiency" but also because

[...]he end of all education is not merely the technically competent workman, but the citizen of the State, who not only seeks to advance his own welfare through his work, but also consciously places his work at the service of the community. The essential of the continuation school is, therefore, the attitude of regarding this stage of technical education as a means for mental and moral training.

In the rural district high schools the funds given to rural-based studies would also be money well-spent argued Hanan because irrespective of their future intentions, the curricula would be relevant to all rural youth. Hanan reasoned that:

The rural bias to be given to the curriculum is not intended to supply a course of work which will useful only to intending farmers. On the contrary, it aims making the curriculum really more suitable in many rural schools than one of the ordinary type, both for those who intend to pursue rural industries and for the majority of those who do not...it should be capable of supplying...a kind of education which would be valuable to the whole body of the pupils, whatever their subsequent occupations might be.

Whilst care had been taken to ensure that these pupils were not disadvantaged by the emphasis on rural studies, the seemingly unshakeable belief that most country students upon leaving school would continue to work in rural industries only served to bolster Hanan’s advocacy for rural bias in the curricula of country high schools. Certainly such an argument exuded educational efficiency because by providing rural schooling to rural students their educational experiences would be directly related to their likely future occupational destinations. Hanan continued:

In a school a large proportion of whose pupils will gain their livelihoods as farmers or in other occupations connected with the land, it would be natural and not improper to give certain vocational trend to the instruction provided...The course would provide for a far better educational training for a country boy who wishes to take up a town occupation than does the present academic pre-university course.

19 Ibid., p. 6.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
Hanan’s eagerness for educational and national (economic) efficiency was reflected in his proposals which seemed appropriate given that New Zealand relied heavily on primary agricultural industries and war-time efficiency propaganda. The introduction of amended Free Place Regulations in 1917 exemplified this - from 1918 all junior third and fourth form district high school students were compelled to study agriculture and dairy science for at least two hours per week in the belief that the country needed more people involved in primary production. Consequently, “Hanan saw the applied science requirements of the revised regulations as affording a means to depopularise market-supported academic and commercial courses and as a way of elevating the status of these...[vocational]... studies.”

Anxious that the government should become increasingly involved in educational change, Hanan turned his attention to the potential social, political and economic gains that would accrue to the State when education catered for short-stay non-academic pupils in the post-primary arena. He was adamant that providing short-stay pupils with greater opportunities for training would greatly enhance the efficiency of the education system in the economic production of competent workers at the same time as appealing to New Zealand’s lengthy tradition of educational and social egalitarianism. Hanan’s proposal to increase the post-primary options was also politically expedient: “This initial general training”, he observed, “cannot be dispensed with in a democracy where equal opportunities are claimed for all. There is no justification for giving the good start, the broad vision, to a few, and condemning too many to a narrow unenlightened existence.”

Priority was also to be given to training technical students for the world of work in order to improve the “efficiency of our industries and occupations”. The “undeserved stigma” needed to be removed from technical education, Hanan argued, because it was...

---


24 Ibid., p. 133. Hanan did this at a time when “his efforts to promote what he viewed as being worthwhile vocational subjects were not appreciated by many parents who saw the Regulations as denying freedom of choice for their children, and discouraging them from preparing for public examinations”.

25 AJHR, 1916, Vol II, E-1a, p. 4. (Educational Progress 1916 New Zealand - Hanan’s Memorandum)

26 Ibid., p. 7.
“dignified, shown to be scientific, and worthy of the highest skill and intelligence”.\textsuperscript{27} He predicted that commercial and industrial progress would naturally follow this reformed programme of technical education and that “efficiency would be raised “because high school pupils...[as future workers]...would be studying subjects that were related directly to their particular intellectual and practical aptitudes”.\textsuperscript{28}

Hanan’s quest for educational fairness seemed to mirror the thinking of the American Frederick Winslow Taylor who similarly had argued that the interests of the employer (in this case, the State) and the employee (in this case, the students) were one and the same. Taylor observed that,

\begin{quote}
\textit{in the case of any single individual the greatest prosperity can exist only when that individual has reached his highest state of efficiency...the most important object of both the workmen and the management should be the training and development of each individual in the establishment, so that he can do (at his fastest pace and with the maximum of efficiency) the highest class of work for which his natural abilities fit him.}\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Such a simple, co-operative marriage between the trainers and the trainees, Hanan reasoned, would forge greater social stability and security in New Zealand by way of enhanced working efficiency in a meritocratic school system. Thus, for Hanan, educational change aimed at greater equality and individual recognition in technical fields came to be synonymous with social efficiency wherein individuals were viewed as being:

\begin{quote}
isolated units with varying capacities and potentials; if each pursued his own advantage, a rough sorting out would take place which would coincide with the skills and status needs of a hierarchically organize work world. The schools could aid the process by scientific counselling. Differentiated skill-training programs, designed in terms of emerging needs of industry and business, would provide the kind of trained manpower required by the corporate system. The emerging ...industrial democracy would provide opportunity for everyone to have an equal
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.


chance to run for the prizes - and all could have a share in an ever-growing material prosperity.^{30}

Hanan also maintained that the welfare of New Zealand society depended not only upon the training of farmers, technicians, doctors and industrialists, but also upon the education of girls as the mothers of future Kiwi generations. He clearly believed that the strength of New Zealand as a nation depended upon women’s capacity to raise ‘fit’, healthy and morally responsible children. Such a conservative stance regarding girls’ education led him to conclude that any occupation outside the home would merely be temporary:

[N]early all of the girls soon become wives and mothers. This must be so if our nation is to stand in its present high position, which is due in the greatest measure to the influence of devoted mothers in our British homes...realize that not even the lawyer, doctor, statesman, or merchant has a calling so richly fruitful of all that is highest and noblest in national life as the mother of a good home...The need of the State to secure the health and physical efficiency of our girls was never greater, more imperative, or more urgent than now, and we must see that they are given an all-round practical education. The vital worth of child-life to the well-being of the State is being revealed in no uncertain manner by present circumstances. To save child-life is an axiom of State preservation; to remedy defect is an axiom of State economy.^{31}

Similar sentiments had been echoed as early as 1899 when some in the medical profession alleged that the welfare of the State depended upon educating girls along feminine and domestic lines only. Concern stemming from the international Boer War conflict (1899-1902) had drawn attention to the ‘fitness of the race’ and the well-being of mothers. These anxieties were heightened by the opinions of many medical professionals whose research appeared to reflect and legitimate these concerns. In New Zealand, for example, Doctor Lindo Ferguson theorised that the concentration on an academic curriculum created sickness and disease in young women serving to “render them unfit to fill the part nature has destined for them”.^{32} Similar themes were echoed in Doctor Truby King’s work wherein he concluded that “Brain work...sapped girls of the strength they


should be storing for motherhood". The clear hysteria generated by these scientific and thus ‘objective’ concerns seemed to nullify any appeal for ‘logic’ to prevail and consequently girls were directed along an educational path which fully endorsed the traditional belief that a woman’s place was in the home. By 1916 little had changed on this education front and the World War I crisis (1914-1918) appeared to have cemented the conservative view such that demands for enhanced national efficiency increasingly focused upon the ‘domestic’ schooling needs of girls and young women. This was exemplified in Clause Six of the 1917 Free Place Regulations wherein junior free-place girls enrolled at district high and secondary schools were compelled to take home-science for two hours per week. The schools concerned moreover were instructed to avoid “concentrating on the examinable aspects of the subject as they were set out in the prescriptions for Public Service and Matriculation” presumably because home science was deemed valuable to females in and of itself. For the time being, examinations were not seen as being central in the domestic arena since the actual knowledge gained through domestic training would be of real benefit to girls in their later - and most important - career as wives and mothers. This approach was evident even in the traditionally non-feminine subjects like arithmetic where girls were required to focus their studies upon the home (their ‘natural’ province) by working out “house-hold accounts”. The 1917 Regulations reflected Hanan’s philosophy that State money would be well-spent on girls’ education provided that they took feminine-oriented subjects, or more specifically, a course in “general science (for at least three hours per week for the full school year) bearing upon the home, and in household economics and hygiene, together with one or more of the following subjects: plain cookery, laundry work, needle craft and garment making, homenursing.”

The concept was deceptively simple. By promoting feminine-styled education, the economy and society would not fall victim to anything that was detrimental to national

33 Ibid., p. 35.

34 Ibid. “One person who challenged King was Alexander Wilson, Rector of Otago Girls’ High School from 1885 to 1896... He himself had spoken out against the short-sightedness of limiting girls in mathematics... he took King to task for his dramatic presentation of facts, with distortion for the sake of rhetoric. He felt that King, as a man of science, should know better than to use isolated examples as proof.”


37 Ibid.
strength and stability like moral laxity, alcoholism, wife-desertion, larrikinism, truancy, deviance and delinquency and this, in turn, would save children from harm and neglect. So strong was this quest to protect the young that even the so-called detrimental influence of socialism was referred to in terms of the continued safety of New Zealand home life. An extract from the Evening Post illustrates this point:

Nothing counts for more in the welfare of a nation than the home life of its people. Home life is built on security, on the prosperity of a country, the soundness and equity of its laws, the opportunities afforded to its citizens for social development; and freedom from the harassing uncertainties occasioned by internal strife and class discord. New Zealand to-day has its minor troubles, but there is not a more prosperous country in the world; not a country with less unemployment; not a country with better prospects ahead under a sound and progressive government for the general betterment of the conditions of life if its people.

The efficient schooling of girls was not the only type of proposal to be made under a welfaristic and popularist type of banner, however. Hanan also suggested that social efficiency could be improved by remedying ill-health suffered by many school children, particularly those living in rural New Zealand. To bolster his argument, Hanan linked the provision of free dental treatment and of regular medical check-ups to the experience(s) of the war crisis in New Zealand. The strength of the nation, he argued, was influenced by the health of its citizens: the military medical examinations had revealed that a large number of military had been rejected “on account of bodily defects, bad teeth...[and]...defective eyesight”.

---

38 Evening Post (31 October) 1925, “Women of New Zealand: Safeguard your Hearths and Homes”, Read All About It, S F Newman, ed., (Wellington, Hicks, Smith and Sons, 1969): 30; R Openshaw, et.al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 123. During this period, as Openshaw et.al. note, “the possibility that socialist subversion might make considerable inroads amongst politically unsophisticated youth was a particular concern. Delegates at the New Zealand Educational Institute’s first post-war conference in February 1919 were told that ‘every child should be supplied with the mental and moral equipment that would enable him to meet the influences that would be brought to bear on him from without’”

39 W H Oliver, “The Origins and Growth of the Welfare State”, Social Welfare And New Zealand Society, A D Trill, ed., (Wellington, Methuen, 1977): 17. To this end, the promotion and improvement of dental training was considerably expanded in 1921. As Oliver notes, by “1927 the service treated 19,000 children in 47 clinics. Ten years later, despite the depression, 90,000 children were treated in 252 clinics.”

Hanan’s reasoning proved remarkably persuasive. To embark upon prevention was certainly easier and probably cheaper for the State than social and economic cures. Open-air schools were but one example of this type of logic:

Reports just to hand show very striking improvements in the health, height, and weight of the children taught in the open air as compared with those taught inside...If more money is available I hope...to ensure that proper remedial or preventative measures be taken on...They would thus form the link between the school and the home.  

Similarly, Hanan also took issue with overcrowding in schools. Obviously, the nation did not want to pursue anything that produced physically and intellectually weak children so in order to enhance the health of school-age children, to make their learning more productive and their educational work-rate certainly more efficient, money needed to be spent on the provision of more and better school facilities. Indeed, Hanan took this point further when he argued that “Expenditure on education should be estimated in terms of child-life, child-health, child-efficiency, and citizen-training. Only for the purposes of accounts should those values be translated into pounds, shillings, and pence.”

The long-term social and economic benefits to the State of rewarding (and thus retaining) ‘quality’ teaching staff was also addressed by the 1916 Memorandum. On this score judgements regarding teacher efficiency soon appeared in the grading requirements. Uniformity in this area of schooling would be a progressive measure, Hanan alleged, because it would serve to curb the long-standing parochialism in the system. In advocating this type of educational advance, Hanan reflected Taylor’s efficiency treatise wherein the supply of ‘first-class workers’ was seen as being essential to securing greater economic and social prosperity. His Memorandum echoed this point clearly: like Taylor, Hanan hoped to ensure that the best person equipped for the job was employed in that position, thereby providing an equal opportunity for securing the best teachers available for particular positions. The benefit to the efficiency of the schools and to the education of the children will be very great, since it will make possible a much more rational distribution of

---

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., p. 11.

teachers, putting the right man or woman in the right place, and stimulating and rewarding the progressive teacher. 44

Indeed the proposal reflected the conventional wisdom that the country's material prosperity depended upon the quality of education and educational training which in turn relied heavily upon the calibre of classroom teachers. To this end, the importance of teacher training for national economic efficiency and also of scales of staffing and pay-rates in both the primary and post-primary arenas were key educational concerns throughout the next decade. This was particularly true in the technical and district high schools and understandable in view of the war crisis and the vital part both sectors played in securing the technological and economic strength of the nation. 45

THE INTRODUCTION OF INTELLIGENCE TESTING IN NEW ZEALAND

Social harmony and growth were not only inextricably linked to the revision of teacher training but also to the introduction of new forms of educational practice. The close of World War I in 1918 had not signalled an end to the pursuit of equality through greater educational efficiency - the introduction of intelligence tests in the early 1920s provides a clear example of this point. Devastated by the war-loss of fathers, sons and workers, educationists and politicians launched this new initiative in an effort to shore up democracy and improve the efficacy, capacity and speed of New Zealand's social and educational systems. Accustomed to the jargon and philosophy of 'drafting' and with

the aftermath of the First World War...[increased]...tensions and fears of social upheaval, brought about by falling export prices...exacerbated...the spectre of Bolshevism...[and]...gave credence to the commonly held belief that social disorder and unrest would be minimised if children learnt at an early age what their place in society was to be and were socialised to fill that place. 46

The introduction into New Zealand schools of tests designed to ascertain the 'mental capacity' of students mirrored these concerns. By the early 1920s, Parr and other educationists were beginning to challenge the old, antiquated and inefficient method of schooling, wherein students appeared to be encouraged to study subjects which were of little practical use to them, since they were unrelated to their future life destinations. Developed in Europe and in the United States of America and inextricably linked to the sciences of psychometrics (phrenology and craniometry) and eugenics, intelligence tests were to be used as instruments of equality because they were designed specifically to "facilitate ability grouping and to provide supplementary data on students for the purposes of ranking and sorting into classrooms where 'appropriate' types of education could be provided." 48

The conviction that this type of testing was scientifically-based, objective (i.e. neutral) and thus fair was rife amongst both efficiency and testing proponents. C.J.Parr, Minister of Education (1920-1926), endorsed the view that fairness could better be maintained and waste eliminated in schooling if students took courses in line with their results in these 'objective' intelligence tests. 49 Like Hanan, Parr's faith in the promotion of efficient schooling seemed unwavering 50 and in fact became a matter of some urgency.

47 M.Olssen, "The Social and Political Logic of Psychometrics", Mental Testing in New Zealand: Critical and Oppositional Perspectives, M.Olssen, ed., (Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1988): 30-39. Psychometrics involved judging the differing abilities and skills of individuals by measuring the region and size of their skull (phrenology). This popular science was also wedded to eugenics, an ideology predicated upon the eurocentric world-view. British people were thought to be morally superior and Britain was held to be the epitome of civilisation, that is, the yardstick against which other races might attempt to measure up. Testing appeared to legitimate this as "links between IQ and criminality, sexual promiscuity and degeneracy and 'general immorality'... were thought to be racially correlated" and immutably established by way of neutral, scientific examination(s).


50 R. Openshaw et.al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 125. As Openshaw et.al. note, Parr’s motives in this matter (as in others) were open to debate. Indeed, "Parr, Massey, the various education boards, even the New Zealand Educational Institute, now became so much less the frightened, misguided patriots, so much more the cynical manipulators of class-consciousness through a school system designed to keep workers in their place."
given the "steadily rising [post-primary] school retention rate" - the outcome, Parr concluded, of too many pupils passing the Proficiency and Competency Examinations and taking "the wrong sort of courses...for too short a period of time". The solution seemed clear: only by employing intelligence tests could schooling be tailored specifically to the needs and capacities of students so that they could equally be served by New Zealand's education system. This reasoning was critically important at a time when real wages were falling and overseas trade remained relatively depressed, despite technological innovations in New Zealand agriculture. Concern surrounding the output of primary producers served to confirm the need for careful drafting and testing in the educational arena. Parr echoed these concerns in his appeal to the public for recognition of agricultural pursuits rather than the supposedly less relevant (to the majority) academic ones. He noted that, "The Department fully recognises the value of a sound and thorough training in agriculture, and that a much larger proportion of our boys should be attracted to and trained in this fundamentally important occupation in the Dominion." Accordingly, the financial cost to the nation of avoiding these types of studies coupled with the political cost of 'pupil wastage', particularly in the academic institutions, acted as a convenient incentive by which Parr could usher into schools the first series of intelligence tests. As McKenzie has observed:

On 29 February 1924 all entrants to all New Zealand post-primary schools were required to sit the Terman Group Test Form A... It was in effect a standard kind of verbal group intelligence test which placed the usual amount of weight upon 'school learning'... designed for the purpose of testing "educability"... The public and the teachers were therefore left in no doubt that the test was being investigated as a possible instrument for selecting 'horses for courses', and that in the meantime it

---


52 Ibid.


was also being used as a check upon the ‘efficiency’ of current course and type of post-primary school enrolment.  

The special appeal of scientific intelligence tests as a way to assess pupils abilities lay in their avoidance of favouritism and their obvious impartiality, both of which appealed to the egalitarian nature of New Zealanders. The testing path was to be made easier by the application of new forms of vocational guidance wherein counsellors were available at schools to explore with parents the educational and employment options open to their children. Such selection was to be ‘equality’ oriented to the extent that it took account of the student’s abilities and preferences and avoided the situation where the outcome was decided by the educational hierarchy by way of strict departmental wishes and regulations. As Faulds has observed, this manoeuvre proved to be a remarkably effective legitimation tactic since history had revealed that the “difficulty in egalitarian New Zealand was that the public had shown they would not take kindly to any attempted imposition of an openly selective school system unless an acceptable method of legitimating the selection process could be found”. Nevertheless, many educationists and politicians were critical of the testing process. As Moss has asserted:


Whilst intelligence testing undoubtedly had its New Zealand enthusiasts in the 1920s, its acceptance at that stage was far from widespread...the New Zealand


58 D. McKenzie, “Little and Lightly: The New Zealand Department of Education and mental testing 1920-1930”, Mental Testing in New Zealand: Critical and Oppositional Perspectives, M. Olssen, ed., (Dunedin, University of Otago, 1988): 79. Although, interestingly and as McKenzie has observed, the conventional belief that women were the weaker sex and merely male helpmates still pervaded the ideology of test constructors, for example: “Thorndike concluded that, ‘education should recognise the natural restriction of women to the more mediocre grades of ability, as well as the fact that marriage and family are desirable for most members of the sex’.”


60 J.E. Watson. Intermediate Schooling In New Zealand, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1964. p. 18. Before the introduction of intelligence testing, debate surrounding the so-called fairness of ‘drafting’ pupils into dissimilar courses had been raised in New Zealand as early as 1907. The editor of the Evening Post, for example, opined: “With the mutton dead... the process of grading becomes easy to the expert, for his data is fixed, but with a child living, the operation is largely a matter of guessing, as many parents know.”
public was not going to accept school and course allocation on the basis of some new fangled test...Perhaps as compelling a reason for the lack of enthusiasm was the un-preparedness of teachers who by and large had not then come to accept the assumption upon which the practice rested.\(^\text{61}\)

Resistance from classroom teachers, coupled with the overwhelming popularity of academic studies and academically-oriented examinations, simply meant that educational efficiency would not be achieved by intelligence testing alone. Parr's experimentation with the junior high school scheme was yet a further ingredient added to New Zealand's education system in an effort to make schooling more cost-effective and essentially fairer.

**THE INTRODUCTION OF THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND**

The implementation of intelligence testing by itself was not enough to affect *real educational equality*, however. New Zealand's experimentation with the American Junior High School (or, as it came to be known in New Zealand in the 1930s, the Intermediate School) system, was a key component underpinning the State's professed wish to give all children *real equality in schooling*: that is, to give every pupil a 'fair go' through an education system designed to relate to and foster the particular skills, talents and interests of pupils, regardless of whether the students enrolled were 'academically' inclined or not. Adopted after the First World War at a time when many post-primary pupils were leaving school before the expiration of their two-year 'free-place',\(^\text{62}\) Junior High Schools were introduced "to meet the needs of those...unsuited to the demands of a traditional academically oriented secondary education and/or who did not intend staying at school beyond the compulsory years".\(^\text{62}\) Fundamentally, these schools were to offer several courses distinct from those provided at the post-primary level, to employ intelligence testing and to

---


\(^{62}\) D. McKenzie, et al., *The Transformation Of The New Zealand Technical High School*, Delta, Monograph No. 10, (1990): 20. As McKenzie notes, educationists like Parr believed that the Intermediate System would appeal to the ambitious as well as the average pupil because it would provide access to academic courses in order that the talented might gain a head-start on secondary school studies while also offering "realistic", vocational courses for early-leavers. It was "hailed as being the perfect model for the efficient development of post-primary schooling in New Zealand" since it worked to eliminate educational waste while catering at the same time for every sort of pupil.

determine the aptitudes of students so that they might be guided into educational opportunities or vocational fields that reflected their abilities. The intermediate system was thus to be ‘equality’ orientated since it was predicated upon the idea that every pupil would not only be helped to make ‘rational’ choices regarding their future but also that all students, by virtue of being New Zealand citizens, would be given “a common basis of experience and knowledge” in a democratic nation. Moreover, coupled with the use of ‘neutral’ testing procedures, the ‘fair’ selection and allocation of pupils into various courses would guarantee that ‘able’ students could advance at an earlier age to higher academic studies. The ‘organic’ nature of this intermediate scheme appealed to efficiency educationists like Parr, Milner and Wells, all of whom agreed with the idea that the

extension of opportunities for more children to attend school for more years...necessitated a greater democratization of the curriculum. These changes were in part a response to the changing vocational needs...which in turn were a reflection of wider social, political, and economic changes, improvements in the standard of living, development in methods of transportation; communication; production; and so on.... At the same time, these improvements in the material affairs of men were accompanied by a heightened respect for human personality, by a greater awareness of the responsibility of each individual in a democratic community, and by an increasing belief that all youngsters, whatever their origin, should have a chance to reach their maximum development. Clearly, intermediates were expected to eliminate educational waste, and in doing so, to strengthen social stability whilst appreciating and catering for student diversity, equally, and

64 R Openshaw. Unresolved Struggle: Consensus and Conflict in New Zealand State Post-Primary Education. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995, p. 67. The role of the intermediates was to be both exploratory and vocationally-oriented. As Openshaw has noted, S.I. Jones, the National Member of Parliament for Hastings, supported these functions even as late as 1949 when he declared “the function of the intermediate school was to be exploratory, to discover the tendencies and the aptitudes of the pupils...At the end of that period a decision should be made whether his [the pupil's] mental ability was such that he should not undertake any further full-time education, but that he should be directed to employment. Those whose mental ability was such that they should get further education should then be directed...to the more academic type of secondary school. ”


at the same time. As Wordsworth has observed, over the three year period and with the help of intelligence testing, the Intermediate Schools were expected to:

liberalise and expand the scope of education at this level, to allow - at first - the introduction of streaming, so that pupils might work and achieve at a realistic level ...[and]... to widen the scope and allow more time to be spent on those subjects of special interest to individual pupils.  

Certainly this was the intention when New Zealand's first intermediate, Kowhai Junior High School, opened in Auckland in 1922. The school was to equip pupils for their future vocational destinations and social obligations by offering a number of elective studies (e.g. academic, commercial, industrial and domestic) and by requiring that students take a course common to all pupils as well. The mandate for this type of curricula had been established earlier by Frank Milner, the Rector of Waitaki Boys' High School, whose own report (1921) had concluded that social stability could best be attained in a unified school environment, wherein pupils from different backgrounds and of different abilities would be taught different subjects together, along with a core of studies common to all. It was a philosophy designed to appeal to New Zealanders' sense of egalitarianism. In an era tainted by war experiences and the fear of socialism, and when children's potential was becoming of increasing concern and beginning to be explored through the formation of 'play-way

---

67 D. McKenzie, "Little and Lightly: The New Zealand Department of Education and mental testing 1920-1930". Mental Testing in New Zealand: Critical and Oppositional Perspectives, M. Olssen, ed., (Dunedin, University of Otago, 1988): 83. In this matter McKenzie's analysis suggests that what Parr sought to do was to "remove the schooling market from parental and pupil choice, and place it upon an efficient basis whereby the right pupils would be studying the right material for the right length of time."


69 H. Lee and G. Lee. "Caught Between Two Schools: The New Zealand Intermediate School Experiment". Waikato Journal of Education, Vol. 2. (1996): 149-150. Notwithstanding this intention, the Kowhai experiment was, from its inception, criticised from many different fronts. The first school principal's (Robert Rudman's) emphasis upon academic attainment was condemned by Ernest Marsden, the Assistant Director of Education, as falling short of the original aim - to focus upon all kinds of 'sensible' choices, including those offered by explorations into vocational paths. Other critics considered the question of specialisation at this age an acute one and, as will be shown later, remained vocally divided on this issue.

70 J.E. Watson. Intermediate Schooling In New Zealand. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1964, p. 44. As Watson has noted, the role of Internates simply was to enhance the classification and sorting of students into the various, separate courses. Pupils were not, at this time, expected to sample or explore all of the elective studies on offer. Put simply, a so-called 'dull' child could not experiment with, or even be exposed to, the entire educational world of an academic pupil.

methods’, the role of New Zealand education in producing solidarity amongst its citizens was regarded by Milner as an imperative one. Indeed, intermediates, like the primary schools, were expected to function as instruments of sound and effective social policy in that they were:

expected to equip each person so that his own personality would develop through activities designed for the well-being of society at large; the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits and powers which that person developed would then be used for the further, nobler development of himself and his fellows. 73

Members of the General Council of Education which met in 1921 sympathised with Milner and recommended that a course of general studies, common to all, as well as curriculum differentiation be undertaken within the ‘same-school’ environment. 74 Unlike Milner, however, these delegates overlooked the exploratory potential 75 of elective studies within the Intermediate environment, suggesting instead that a more restrictive and comprehensive system be implemented in New Zealand. 76 Endorsing the establishment of Intermediates in 1922, those present at the Education Department’s Post-Primary Conference broadly echoed these same sentiments. Convened by John Caughley, the Director of Education, the meeting recommended a common core education in the Intermediate Schools and declared that a general education curriculum, rather than a specialised one, be central to the curriculum of these schools. 77 However, financial constraints brought on by the great depression (1920-1930s) prevented the full implementation of these proposals. Significantly, further resistance to the general education

73 Ibid., p. 223.
75 W.F. Connell, A History of Education in the Twentieth Century World, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 35. Unlike the American Junior High School System, New Zealand’s Intermediate School model deemed it efficient to stream pupils into different courses first (i.e. from the beginning) rather than let students ‘try out’ every course to see which one s/he liked best and, more importantly, was best suited to. As Connell has noted, this practice differed from that of the American Junior High School System wherein “careful attention could be paid to the variety of backgrounds, abilities, and aptitudes of pupils, by providing a wide ranges of courses - general, special, and vocational - in which they might explore and seek guidance”.
76 Ibid., p. 149.
77 Ibid., pp. 147-148.
model came from many departmental officers who remained convinced that economic and educational efficiency were one and the same and that both would be attained in an environment essentially committed to educational specialisation.

Kowhai's second principal, J.F. Wells, clearly believed in this course of action too. He declared his school's function to be "the great sorting department for a mass of heterogenous humanity that is reaching adolescence" wherein talented children would be given a 'head-start' in their academic studies and early school-leavers would better be able to explore their talents and achieve in a 'streamed' and 'specialist-type' of setting. His faith in this matter was axiomatic and keenly expressed some years later in an extract from the 1928 Kowhai School Magazine:

What have we achieved? We have shown that by organising the faster workers in separate classes they can cover a good course in mathematics, French and science... without neglecting the primary subjects. We have shown that retarded boys and girls whose class life in the ordinary school is misery, the work being too hard and the competition with brighter children disheartening, actually enjoy school where the unattractive subjects are diversified with book-keeping, art, laboratory work, metal- and wood-work, needlework and cookery...[and]...that children of standard five thoroughly enjoy French conversation when taught simply, and are thus more fitted to attempt a language in their secondary course.

Wells was not alone in his belief that educational specialisation was both efficient and socially cohesive. T.B. Strong, the Director of Education, also expressed similar sentiments in 1928 when he argued that differentiated schooling (wherein pupils were streamed on the basis of scientifically neutral intelligence tests) was not only less wasteful but also more effective in the production of confident, self-assured people. He reasoned that:

the intellectual pupils with a decided bent towards academic studies can be taught together, those with a bent towards business occupations can be taught together, those with high manual ability but with little inclination towards literary studies can be taught together and will not feel they are in any way inferior to those who happen to have the type of mind that can grapple with academic studies. Under such an organisation the formation of the so-called inferiority complex is not at all likely since the pupil is working with others of approximately the same grade and type of

---


79 J. Wordsworth, Unwillingly to School, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1976, pp. 64-65
mentality... with such an organisation the probability of producing misfits in life’s work is very remote indeed.\textsuperscript{80}

Nonetheless, despite Strong’s doubts and the growth in the number of Intermediates being established, controversy persisted nationwide amongst policy makers regarding the potential social and economic repercussions of early educational ‘specialisation’. The significance of this debate was accelerated by events in the social arena which emphasised the importance of community involvement in the development of ‘good’ and healthy children for harmonious social ends.

The ensuing 1925 Child Welfare Act, illustrates this point.\textsuperscript{81} The Act theoretically dealt with orphaned, neglected and delinquent children by inextricably linking legislative efforts to the notion of shared responsibility and communal remedies.\textsuperscript{82} The basic premise was that interest in the social and educational welfare of children had to be a collective concern if, as a society, New Zealand was to grow and prosper. Indeed, efficiency demanded the early detection of potential social problems in order to enhance the working capabilities (and efficiency) of young New Zealanders and, with it, the productive ability of the whole nation. Applied to the issue of educational specialisation then, this meant that some children could ‘miss out’ on opportunities to grow if streamed into courses too early and could unfairly be tagged as somehow different or unequal to their academic counterparts. As James Tibbs, the principal of Auckland Grammar School, had earlier (1922) exhorted:

If education is to make men good citizens of the world, not merely good carpenters and plumbers, not merely docile instruments of tyrannical commands, it must teach them something of man, it must inspire them with some affection for the ideals by which mankind has been swayed... Our children are run into the school machine as oranges into a sorter - the little ones dropping out through the proper hole into shop or office, the bigger ones rolling on till they tumble into college. We are not a happy-hearted imaginative people... schools, in which the destiny of each child is fixed at an early age, denies to the majority the chance of becoming competent


\textsuperscript{81} W.H. Oliver. “The Origins and Growth of the Welfare State”. Social Welfare and New Zealand Society, A.D.Trimn. ed., (Wellington. Methuen, 1977): 17. By this Act children’s courts were established. Welfare officers were also appointed with the view that the increased incidence of problem children was a social phenomenon which could be ‘cured’ (and, in many cases, ‘prevented’) rather than ‘punished’ by State agencies.

business or professional men, or captains of industry, and does not even produce broad-minded ordinary citizens.\(^83\)

In an era characterised by anti-socialist feeling,\(^84\) and when young people were migrating to urban areas in search of employment opportunities,\(^85\) the quest for national unity and prosperity through individual contentment and ‘belonging’ appeared fundamentally urgent and in terms of the ‘specialist schooling’ debate, educationally and socially necessary. By the mid 1920s then, many educational analysts believed that there was no room for complacency in this matter. No latitude could be given to so-called inappropriate educational techniques which, it was alleged, might produce citizens who felt alienated from, and undervalued in, the community. Not surprisingly, the government became increasingly anxious to find an educational solution to the problems that beset the State.

**THE 1925 REICHEL - TATE REPORT**

Against this background Harry Reichel and Frank Tate released their report analysing the relationship between the post-primary school curricula and university education.\(^86\) Their assessment brought to light several issues which had also been raised by the establishment of Intermediate Schools, not the least of which was the question surrounding the efficacy and fairness of ‘early specialisation’ in schools. With regard to this and in view of the ‘evil’ and dominating influence of the Matriculation Examination within the secondary system, the report named the Kowhai Junior High School project as “one of the most hopeful and instructive advances in public education in New Zealand”.\(^87\) It

---

\(^83\) Education Department, *Conference on Post-Primary Education*, Wellington: Education Department, 1922 (Chair: John Caughley), pp. 20-21.


\(^85\) R. Openshaw, *Unresolved Struggle: Consensus and Conflict in New Zealand State Post-Primary Education*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995, p. 39. As Openshaw has noted, the shifting rural to urban population was a source of constant concern for education policy makers and this was often reflected by the nature of their recommendations, for example, and amongst other issues, the push for an increased emphasis upon agricultural studies.

\(^86\) AJHR, 1925, Vol. II, E-7a, pp. 1-2. (Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand, the Reichel-Tate Report)

appeared that Kowhai School was providing specialist services in areas that were not properly catered for by any other school scheme (like agricultural studies,) at a time when the Matriculation Examination was being used ‘inappropriately’ by students in all post-primary institutions. Too many pupils, Reichel and Tate alleged, were entering and passing this elite test and then employing it as a work credential rather than as a passport to academic studies at university. This trend illustrated the need for drastic educational change. Re-shaping the Matriculation Examination (along with many other educational tests) was a realistic alternative - the provision of a greater number of examination options would not only “satisfy the natural demand of the public and of students for a school leaving certificate” 88 but also (and at the same time) provide the qualification requirements for university entrance.

Accordingly, as Lee and Lee have noted, these officials, in particular Frank Tate, appeared to favour a selective system of post-primary education such that “instead of ‘bridging the gap’ between the primary and the secondary school, the junior high school would become an end in itself for the non-academic pupil, while the bright child would proceed directly to a full academic secondary course.” 89 The new junior high schools, it was hoped, would eliminate educational waste in a so-called ‘democratic’ and ‘meritocratic’ fashion because they offered the most cost-effective solution to the problem of short-stay pupils who did not fully utilise (and thus not adequately benefit from) two years free academic post-primary education. 90 Despite the reality of a looming economic depressior, Tate remained confident that the junior high schools could efficiently sort pupils and thereby prevent amongst the academically ‘unfit’ the phenomenon of credential inflation. 91 However, entries into the Matriculation Examination indicated that Tate had misread the public perception of the importance this test which, in an era of economic turbulence, had now been positioned as the minimum credential by which entry into the public service could

88 AJHR. 1925. Vol. II. E-7a, p. 23. (Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand. the Reichel-Tate Report)


91 ‘Credential Inflation’ is a term used to explain the phenomenon created in the educational and vocational arenas when more students seek access to, and success in, school examinations.
be gained.\textsuperscript{92} As a result, the economic conditions of the day shored up the popularity of this examination amongst the ranks of ambitious young job seekers, many of whom avoided enrolling at the vocationally-oriented junior high schools and continued instead to strive for educational success through the academic Matriculation Examination.\textsuperscript{93}

The value of the Matriculation Examination as a vocational stepping-stone was also discussed in the Reichel-Tate Report in the context of the comparative national importance of agricultural and technical schooling at the post-primary and university levels. According to the report, New Zealand urgently needed agricultural facilities at the university level to bolster the educational, and indeed the economic worth and standing of agricultural studies.\textsuperscript{94} What was needed to succour national advance in New Zealand’s primary industry, the authors claimed, was expert and scientific leadership in the field; an effective method of agricultural training (especially at the university level); and for all likely students to be shown the ‘real profit’ of agricultural work.\textsuperscript{95} These changes, along with the development and promotion of effective agricultural courses at the district high school level, Reichel and Tate predicted, would rectify New Zealand’s present educational and economic predicament.\textsuperscript{96} They argued that by encouraging students to take up these types of studies, the district high schools would act as ‘feeders’ to the university and, under the guidance of ‘first-rate’ experts, the status and worth of agriculture would quickly be realised throughout the colony.\textsuperscript{97} Schooling pupils in this direction would result in sound, efficient education and social policy and so promote economic growth and social harmony. Riddled with reference


\textsuperscript{93} A.G. Butchers, \textit{The Education System}, Auckland: National Printing Company, 1932, p. 138. At the time of the Reichel-Tate Report, 50% of post-primary students were taking either commercial or general courses geared towards entry in the Matriculation Examination.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{AHJR}, 1925, Vol. II, E-7a, p. 6. (Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand, the Reichel-Tate Report). Indeed, it was the Reichel-Tate Report that provided the basis for the establishment of the Massey Agricultural College in Palmerston North.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.


\textsuperscript{97} \textit{AHJR}, 1925, Vol. II, E-7a, p. 42. (Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand, the Reichel-Tate Report).
to the tenets of scientific management, the belief that quality ‘expert’ guidance would speed up the pace of national advance was clearly expressed in the Report:

The question which the Government of New Zealand must decide, and at once, is whether: the example of countries which have made a success of agricultural education in its highest aspects is to be followed, and whether the principle is to be accepted that the best possible training for the future directive staff of the agricultural army is the only sound policy. Second-rate and third-rate agricultural ‘experts’ are a hindrance and a danger to agricultural progress. New countries suffer greatly under such guidance.\(^98\)

Consequently, if the recommended central school of agriculture was also established:

under which education in liberal studies would be associated with training in the more directly practical courses of rural life and work...[it]...would do much to help towards the development of a culture of the country as distinct from the culture of the city...to develop widely a taste for country life, and the power of finding happiness and interest in country pursuits, and in the natural life of the country...The present university system of New Zealand, if left uncorrected, must continue to undermine the basic industry of agriculture, on which the whole future prosperity of the Dominion depends, inasmuch as it tends to produce a progressive intellectual impoverishment of the countryside. Nothing can effectively stop this draining process, but an institution exerting an equally strong pull in the opposite direction, such as a well-equipped university or university college with agriculture as its central subject.\(^99\)

To this end, the training of agricultural teachers within the district high schools as well as the effective preparation and grooming of young rural girls (to be the future wives of New Zealand farmers) were also principal considerations examined in the Reichel-Tate Report. The authors implied that education along these lines would better ensure national advance since New Zealand’s progress was inextricably linked to the quality of their rural people; farmers would not only be working in stable, well-adapted family environments but also they would have the skills and the agricultural knowledge to attain the maximum economic potential from their lands.

Reichel and Tate also analysed the efficacy of technical training within an increasingly technological society and argued that the demand for technical workers made

\(^{98}\) Ibid.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 43.
reorganisation of technical education imperative. In practical terms this reconstruction required an increased emphasis upon the value of technical studies and the recognition that university work be strictly ordered so as not to overlap with the work done within the technical arena. To bolster this re-orientation towards greater efficiency, the authors proposed that the technical high schools should move away from academic schooling and gear themselves “more definitely along the line of real technical work” in order to guarantee greater educational efficiency. Under such a scheme the Universities would not teach technical studies and the technical high schools would avoid academic work. Moulding technical schooling along these lines would ensure its better development, thereby making it possible to cater fairly to technical pupils, whatever their future vocational intentions might be. This scheme, coupled with the Junior High School system wherein many children would leave school having been taught some compulsory lessons as well as having been trained in an appropriate (albeit a short) course, would secure efficiency and equality across all of the educational arenas. The theory was simple: upon leaving school, all children in New Zealand would have been through the same efficient, meritocratic process whereby they would have been fairly (through the use of ‘objective’ intelligence tests) consigned into a course commensurate with their abilities and interests and with the help of expertly trained teachers soundly advised on the path of study to enter the world of work.

However, many of the educational changes advocated in the Reichel-Tate Report did not eventuate. Public resistance, political opposition, the harsh reality of the economic situation and a change of government all conspired against these would-be policy-makers. In short this meant that their call for less emphasis to be placed upon examinations, for less institutional overlapping, for greater technical, agricultural and manual school opportunities to be provided to students never actually transpired in reality. At Lee et al. have noted,

---

100 Ibid., p. 31. The report acknowledged that in New Zealand at this time there was an “abundant field” of work for people trained in technical areas.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.


The reality was that curricular overlap existed between the technical high school and secondary schools because the former were not prepared to prevent their pupils from entering for examinations and the latter, desirous of preserving their roll numbers, were similarly compelled to offer commercial instruction to their ‘non-academic pupils’.  

Regardless of Reichel and Tate’s protestations concerning the value of ‘academic’ courses, students remained totally convinced that only through academic schooling, culminating in a pass in the Matriculation Examination, would their vocational opportunities be enhanced.

**THE QUESTION OF ‘CULTURAL’ EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND**

As the number of junior high schools grew nationwide so too did the number of objections surrounding the purpose of these institutions. In particular, questions surrounding the wisdom of ‘drafting’ students at an early age into distinct manual or non-manual courses were raised by critics of the junior high school scheme. Members of the Labour Party, in particular Peter Fraser (spokesman for education) and Harry Holland, were especially critical of this system because they believed that early specialisation in the Junior High Schools, or indeed, in the technical or the academic secondary schools denied pupils their fundamental right (as citizens of the nation) to be schooled in common ‘cultural’ elements. Fraser and Holland were especially wary of Parr’s efficiency strategy of amalgamating some of the smaller technical and secondary schools in the districts and were anxious to ensure that:

‘cultural education’ should be available to all pupils, regardless of their vocational aspirations. Fraser concluded that a general education curriculum would counter narrow training parading as ‘education’ and open up opportunities to working-class children to enter academic courses... there is no man in the Dominion whatever his

---


106 D. McKenzie, et al., *Scholars or Dollars? Selected Historical Case Studies of Opportunity Costs in New Zealand Education*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996, pp. 125-126. Taking subjects geared towards entry in the Matriculation Examination had long been evident in the district high schools too. In 1912 the Cohen Commission had ruefully noted that the demand for such examinable subjects clearly outweighed the requests for rural studies. Thirteen years later Frank Tate (of the Reichel-Tate Report) concurred with this claim and declared that the educational tradition of favouring academic subjects over rural ones was deeply “ingrained in rural New Zealand”.
occupation in life [who would not] be a better tradesman, a better worker, a better citizen, a better professional man because of a full cultural education.  

According to Holland, all pupils should be schooled in some common subjects because educational efficiency would only be secured when all citizens, irrespective of their abilities and vocational fates, had the right of access to a compulsory part of the school curriculum. Fraser took this reasoning a step further when he questioned the impartiality of intelligence testing and stressed the importance of common studies in not only preserving national stability but also in bonding together children of different backgrounds as citizens of the nation. For this reason, as Faulds has observed, Fraser

angrily denounced the idea underlying the scheme as that of ‘shunting the children of the working classes into the trades of the country’...[proclaiming]...that if the tests were used to determine vocation...the children would be subjected to one of the greatest frauds and injustices ever perpetrated upon them.  

Fraser implored post-primary institutions to refrain from using intelligence tests to ‘draft’ students into different courses because he suspected that they operated unfairly against working class pupils, assessing in them that which was ‘environmentally determined’ rather than their innate abilities. To this affect he stated, “There should be a revolution in education. The schools are for the instruction of the children and not their mental debauchery”. With a similar message Holland took a different tact, opining that:

while vocational training is necessary, and while a great amount of attention must be paid to it, still New Zealand can never afford to permit the education system here to gravitate towards the gross materialism that characterised the German system of education. The German system may have been very admirable in its machine-like provision and methods; but if you study German education under Kaiserdon you will find that the main idea at the back of it was that of making the child an efficient wage slave - an efficient machine for the production of wealth and still more wealth

---


109 Ibid., p. 93.

110 J. Thorn, Peter Fraser. New Zealand's Wartime Prime Minister, London: Odhams Press, 1952, p. 69. Fraser's statement was addressed to a teachers' conference.
with the class State supervising the operation of the machine... We must devote a lot more time to cultural training.¹¹¹

The inference was plain: in an egalitarian society like New Zealand, social progress and educational equality would best be served by employing in schools a mainly comprehensive-type of curricula rather than one which separated and unfairly differentiated people.

However, a number of prominent educationists disagreed with Fraser and Holland. Morrell, Marsden and Howell, for example, favoured eliminating as much waste as possible in the school sector by promoting the separatist-specialist argument. They argued that with a growing post-primary school retention rate, educational efficacy demanded that students be divided into different courses. Such a strategy was held to be fair because not every pupil was suited to or could succeed in an academic education stream. Howell refined this opinion further. Unlike Fraser and Holland, he was satisfied that educational efficiency would work only if common studies were open to one group of pupils:

"The first class of pupil, whose school life is to be so much shorter, needs a specialised course to train him for his future calling; the pupil with the longer school life can be given a broader foundation on which he may build a much higher edifice of education in the future. It is not economical, either of time or money, to put both kinds through the same course."¹¹²

The elimination of waste in schooling and the promotion of educational fairness were not mutually exclusive goals, Howell alleged. To this end, specialisation offered the perfect solution wherein social harmony would be assured as every pupil would be fitted into appropriate long or short-term education courses and each in turn would be able to work to succeed (at different levels of course,) in them.


¹¹² R. Openshaw, et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, p. 154. William Morrell was the Principal of Otago Boys’ High School in Dunedin. Ernest Marsden was the Assistant-Director of Education and John Howell was the Director of the Christchurch Technical School.
Further consideration of this specialisation issue was later raised in the 1928 Syllabus Revision Committee (Lawson) Report commissioned by the Minister of Education, Robert Wright. Interestingly, the Syllabus Revision Committee Report contained a Majority and Minority Report which differed significantly on the question of early specialisation. The Majority Report proposed that the education system be modified significantly at all levels “to secure better articulation with the work of secondary and technical schools”.  

Not only was schooling to be compulsory for all students until the age of fifteen but also the primary school syllabus was to be re-worked so that those students in standards five and six could take up studies which were more akin to the work of the post-primary (secondary) schools and enter upon these “in a more truly educative manner”. It was upon this basis that the Majority Report favoured the establishment of exploratory (not specialised) courses at the upper levels of the primary school as well as founding a common core of studies in post-primary institutions. The ‘majority’ members alleged that such modifications in both educational areas would inevitably promote harmonious social relations and by implication efficient working ones:

It has for some time been generally recognized that here, as elsewhere, primary-school courses were too restricted, too formal, and too little related to practical life; that they were very poorly articulated with secondary-school courses; and that they offered to pupils too little opportunity of discovering where their best capacities really lay. The interests of mankind everywhere are preponderantly practical. The school therefore, must provide varied courses for these activities, so that in a general way pupils may develop within themselves those mental and physical associations and modes of expression and appreciation which, after primary-school years are over, will take a more specialized form either in some higher type of educational institution or in the actual business of life itself. At the same time the Committee has kept steadily in view the humanistic element in education, regarding it as vital that boys and girls should be educated to be intelligent, moral agents. The general feeling not only of the Committee, but of the witnesses who tendered evidence, was that a combination of the cultural and the practical was necessary; that a common core was desirable for all courses, and that there are more elements of culture in practical studies than have yet been made use of. The Committee is unanimous in declaring not only that hand-work should be given a more definite place in the school scheme, but also that teachers should endeavour to inculcate in the pupils an equal respect for all kinds of work. No system of education can be satisfactory if one section of pupils is led, even subconsciously, to assume an air of superiority over

---


114 Ibid., p. 11.
other sections. No emphasis can be too strong on this sociological aspect of education - the solution of many industrial difficulties may yet be found in the school.\textsuperscript{115}

These recommendations appeared to mirror the ‘general education’ philosophy which had been expressed earlier at the Education Department’s Post-Primary Conference in 1922. Support for the exploratory nature of the Junior High Schools illustrates this as the Majority Report also envisaged these schools contributing to the elimination of educational waste. In the Committee’s opinion, Junior High Schools served to:

reveal those special aptitudes which under the traditional curriculum too often lie hidden. Lack of diversified courses has frequently caused much waste of time in the later years of education, and in the case of those whose education ended at 14 has sent out into the world of work a multitude of boys and girls who had never proved to themselves what kind of work they were best suited for. It is impossible to estimate the ultimate economic gain to the community from this process of discovery of capacity. It is equally impossible to estimate the amount of satisfaction to the individual which springs from confidence aroused by success in school, more particularly when, under the new syllabus, this school-work will present, as the Committee believes, an increased degree of resemblance to or of preparation for the life of the adult community... Further, the raising of the school age to 15 will give under educational guidance greater emotional stability to pupils at the most critical period of their lives.\textsuperscript{116}

Subsequent proposals also seemed to extend the work done in 1922 as the Majority Report’s assessment of the worth of ‘social promotion’ reveals. Essentially, social promotion was a system wherein so-called ‘retarded’ children were able to advance at the age of twelve to post-primary studies. It was hoped that this move would preserve the mental and physical well-being of ‘dull’ children who under the old system were often ‘held back’, made to feel inferior and, as a result, were susceptible to troublemaking in and outside of the school environment. Social promotion was thought to be an ideal solution in that it could prevent the unnecessary humiliation of these ‘types’ of children by allowing them to ‘grow’ with their peers, and by providing them also with a “stimulating environment of physical and intellectual superiors...where what gifts they...[had would]...be further developed in classroom and workshop.”\textsuperscript{117} In this respect, the equality of educational opportunity ideal was thus encapsulated by a new ‘whole child’ mentality

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., pp. 24-25.
wherein drawing out the best qualities and skills of children in order to secure social equanimity was a vital part of the proposed reform. The call from the Majority Report for greater attention to be paid to ‘gifted’ children within the primary schools so that they might advance more quickly through the education levels along with the appeal for ‘social promotion’ clearly illustrates this point.\textsuperscript{118} Allowing ‘gifted’ pupils access to more advanced studies at an earlier age was seen to be efficient education policy. Appropriately tailored educational experiences would do much to enhance the performance of gifted students in schools and thereby maximise the opportunities provided therein. Educational waste, in terms of those not fully utilising their abilities, would be eliminated and schooling along these lines would also serve to create social stability by producing highly-tuned, well-adjusted, productive workers and happy citizens.\textsuperscript{119}

In the interests of social unity the Majority Report also proposed changes in the post-primary arena. Beginning with the view that harmonious social relations were borne out of efficient educational ones the Committee suggested that consolidation and/or greater co-operation between the academic, the technical and the government sectors was urgently needed. To eliminate the potential waste of resources in smaller towns, in terms of the staffing and building requirements in rural based schools, the Committee proposed that all surrounding post-primary schools be consolidated into one institution wherein various academic, commercial, technical and agricultural courses might be provided in a more cost-effective manner.\textsuperscript{120} It was also anticipated that having more students in the agricultural classes would elevate the status and thus the importance of rural studies in the mind-set of

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 31.

\textsuperscript{119} R. Moltzen, “Historical Perspectives”, Gifted and Talented, D. McAlpine and R. Moltzen, eds., (Palmerston North: ERDC Press, Massey University, 1996): 14. On the subject of ‘gifted’ children in the New Zealand historical and contemporary context, Larsson has offered a further analysis, observing that “the strong notion of egalitarianism pervades the education system and society and so generally inhibits the variety of educational methods tailored to suit the needs or the talents of the individual. To suggest differentiation of programming to some teachers conjures up the spectre of elitism.” Larsson suggests that New Zealanders are so adverse to the idea of giving one group any advantage over the other that attempts to ‘sell’ such a policy to them usually ends in failure. In the context of the 1926-1928 Syllabus Revision Committee Report then it seems that subsuming the needs of the majority for the advantage of a few would have been a virtually impossible reality for New Zealanders to swallow. The commissioners understood such egalitarian sentiment and made their suggestions regarding the treatment of ‘gifted’ and ‘dull’ children publicly palpable by using the notion of social harmony (and progress) in their quest for educational and indeed social efficiency.

\textsuperscript{120} Report of the Syllabus Revision Committee 1926-1928 (Majority and Minority Report), Wellington: New Zealand Department of Education, 1928, Their proposal was similar to the contemporary multilateral-comprehensive schooling model.
local students, thereby boosting their interest in working within this primary economic field.\textsuperscript{121}

In the urban post-primary schools, the Committee also suggested a plan to do away with educational inefficiencies. They alleged that post-primary institutions needed to change significantly to cater for the very large and diverse numbers of students continuing on to higher education:

With full knowledge of these facts the members of the Committee are of the opinion that the functions of primary and secondary schools should be more exactly defined, and that complete courses of instruction should be drawn up for those pupils who would leave school at about 15.\textsuperscript{122}

The members also acknowledged the well-known problem of subject ‘overlap’ in the urban schools and conceded that the Technical High Schools had “created among children distinctions which are educationally unsound and socially undesirable”\textsuperscript{123} despite the fact that “in everything but name”\textsuperscript{124} they worked like the academic secondary schools. The reality, of course, was that students at the technical colleges were being prepared for the Matriculation and Teachers’ Certificate Examinations just as some in the secondary institutions pupils were being schooled in woodwork, metalwork and home science. The Committee concluded that modifications to the present system needed to be made because there was “confusion in the minds of parents, serious overlapping of work, and, as far as the smaller centres are concerned, economic waste.”\textsuperscript{125} To achieve greater working efficiency and to promote courses equally amongst the student population, the Committee proposed that four courses be provided within each school environment comprising the academic stream leading up to university studies, the commercial or general group, lessons in the areas of handicraft and construction, and, finally, an agricultural course for the boys and domestic lessons for the girls. Moreover, for sixty per cent of the time all students were to

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 12.
take studies common to all classes of pupils thus enhancing social stability. The promotion of individual contentment and belonging through ‘like’ and ‘shared’ educational experiences was seen by the ‘majority’ members as sound education policy because it would generate social harmony by integrating diverse pupils on the basis of common loyalties and understandings. Accordingly, whilst it was vital that “boys and girls...have an education directly related to the practical conditions of life ... [in order to enhance educational efficiency, it was, for the purpose of social well-being]...also requisite that they should have an education that will minister to and ennoble the aesthetic and emotional cravings of human nature”.

Stability in schools, and indeed in society, would further be assured since girls were to come under the regular influence of women teachers who were better able to guide their feminine choices and improve their feminine skills. This, coupled with a new and independent system of school inspection, closer co-ordination between the university and the Education Departments, and the termination of real primary school work after the Standard Four level would all work to ensure a smoother and tighter articulation between the primary and post-primary arenas and the educational and vocational sectors so as to maximise greater equality and working efficiency. Certainly the report offered a range of suggestions geared at promoting social harmony as well as educational efficiency and equality in New Zealand, with ideas such as:

- stressing practical activity in order that children may grow up with a just recognition of all forms of service rendered to society; the diminution of the amount of arithmetic, the elimination of useless jargon or formulae such as those which have too long disfigured the teaching of grammar and mathematics; the humanizing of history and geography...[the]...expansion to social ideals and world ideals like the League of Nations; the provision after the completion of Standard IV, of a variety of courses in consonance with the needs and capacities of adolescence; the attempt to make school years both a life and a preparation for further life; the attempt to enrich the State by enriching the lives of the individuals composing the State...the effort to achieve a high standard of morality, and, in general, to develop a curriculum and a system which up to the age of 14 or 15 will offer to all the same educational opportunities and so help onwards the cause of democracy.

---

\(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 19.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., p. 15.

\(^{128}\) Ibid.
However, the quest to secure democracy through the achievement of greater educational articulation between the work done in the primary and post-primary schools was not without controversy. Three members of the Syllabus Revision Committee issued a Minority Report, the findings and proposals of which differed substantially from those heralded in the Majority Report. The value of educational selection and of early specialisation was sanctioned and vigorously promoted in this report. It alleged, for example, that employing such techniques would do much to eliminate educational waste and thereby advance New Zealand along progressive economic and social lines:

If New Zealand is to hold a proud position in the forefront of progressive and enlightened democracies, and develop along self-reliant lines, our system of education must include schools of varied types which will give to all those who possess the finest brains and skill in handicraft, the training that will fit them to be leaders in thought and in administration, whether political, professional, commercial and industrial (in the broad adaptation of the term), and will offer all degree of ability the opportunities necessary to enable the best service possible to be given to the community, whether in the professions, the administrative sphere, on the land, in the counting house or the workshop, and the most important of all (where the education of the potential mothers of the race is concerned), in the home.

In this respect the Minority Report directly contradicted the proposals made by the Majority Paper. Furthermore, the three members who signed the Minority Report were opposed to the use and growth of the Junior High Schools because they regarded them as being too expensive to run and lacking efficacy and purpose. They claimed that separate institutions were neither educationally nor socially necessary and that the original school system could better enhance the articulation between the primary and post-primary schools at a more cost-effective rate by refining the content and method of teaching along specialist-educational lines. Noting in their report that the tight economic circumstances of the day prevented 'radical' changes from being made, the 'minority' members urged the Minister of Education not to "sacrifice the primary schools - and the child - on the altar of costly and

129 Ibid., p. 56. The three members comprising the Minority Committee were A.E. Lawrence, G.T. London and Arch Sando. representing outside interests, education boards and school committees respectively.

130 Ibid., pp. 47-48.

131 Ibid., p. 36. The Minority Report indicated that sorting pupils into ability categories and thus securing greater articulation between the work of the primary, the academic and technical schools would be more easily and cheaply undertaken in a modified primary school system than within the Junior High School institutions.
unsound experimentation". They further claimed that the Junior High Schools prevented rather than promoted the elimination of educational and social waste and concluded that efficiency and educational equality could be maximised by re-working the original school system so that it could effectively test, stream and select various pupils for different types of specialist courses:

New Zealand must institute a complete reorientation of the whole system, designed to give the country a new birth of educational freedom; in other words, State education in New Zealand needs to be perfected by being so scientifically refounded as a universal, reasonable, and liberal process of development that the product of our schools - the average individual no less than enlightened members of an industrious and progressive citizenry - may “have life and have it more abundantly”.

Importantly, the Minority Committee argued that money would be saved by educating students along occupational lines and, if this was done effectively, educational equality would be guaranteed because each pupil would be empowered to make wise choices as their future vocational destinations were concerned.

Other proposals in the Minority Report appeared to mirror a bias towards specialist types of studies and a rejection of Junior High Schools as separate educational institutions. In view of the relatively high numbers of students passing the academically-based Matriculation Examination in the technical and the district high schools, the ‘minority’ members suggested that staffing and government support be increased to preserve and promote the unique and valuable contribution of these schools in New Zealand society. They believed that technical education was so vital and essential to New Zealand’s education and social schema that it could never act simply as an “appendage” to a composite junior high school system. Moreover, in terms of the district high schools, the ‘minority’ proponents claimed that:

---

133 Ibid., p. 63.
134 Ibid., p. 45.
135 Ibid., p. 60.
136 Ibid., p. 55.
Equality of educational opportunity for the rural girl and boy, which is imperative where the destiny of a country reposes in the fortunes of the man of the land, will come only when there has been a general reorganisation of facilities in terms of a larger unit; more effective educational guidance with a distinct bias to rural life; and more liberal provision in the country districts for the practical instruction of rural children.\(^{137}\)

In short, the ‘minority’ members maintained that rural studies were better promoted to rural students. The implication was clear - *only those able to intellectually benefit from an academic education would be given it freely and until the age of sixteen.*\(^{138}\) The merit and worth of rural and technical studies as opposed to purely academic ones in a primary producing nation such as New Zealand was plainly obvious. As a society we had much to learn from our international counterparts, many of whom appeared to acknowledge that while “man does not live by bread alone... practical educationists do not overlook the stern economic fact that bread has to be won”\(^{139}\)

It was upon this ideological basis that the minority committee also recommended that the school leaving age be raised to fifteen years. This move, coupled with the better organisation of smaller primary school classes, would aid in the efficacy of schooling and would enhance the ability of pupils to make sensible vocational decisions regarding the transitional efficiency from schooling to various places of employment.\(^{140}\)

The role of teachers in this process was also examined carefully in the Minority Report. Noting that the “weaknesses and insufficiency of the work of the schools, as revealed in the average product, is a subject of general comment”,\(^{141}\) the members recommended that teachers, as the grassroots counsellors in this process, be more carefully screened and selected. Considerable care needed to be taken to select staff in view of the fact that “Education is experience, and every impression that a child receives during his


\(^{139}\) *Ibid.*, p. 63. Scotland, Africa and Australia were just some of the countries mentioned in the Minority Report as vanguards of educational and social progress because of their emphasis upon selection for entry into vocationally-based studies.


school life counts for something in the final result.”\textsuperscript{142} In the interests of national efficiency and educational advance, therefore, they proposed that entry into the teaching profession be more securely protected.\textsuperscript{143} The message was unequivocal: in an ever-changing world only the ‘best’ people should educate, select and guide students into courses befitting their abilities, aptitudes, and inclinations. Well educated and trained teachers would ensure that individuals be “so educated that [they] can choose wisely [their] own life and occupation.”\textsuperscript{144}

This message was timely in a vastly changing world where the lack of occupational opportunities soon became the central focus of New Zealanders, young and old alike. As the nation plummeted into a state of severe economic and social depression one’s vocational choice(s), regardless of educational credentials, became increasingly limited. These logistics soon superseded the importance of the educational controversy highlighted in both the Majority and Minority Reports and State and individual attention moved quickly to other more basic arenas in an attempt to remedy harsh public living conditions. But before this was to happen, another attempt was made to secure greater educational efficiency, this time in the primary school sector. Overhauling the primary school syllabus was supposed to usher in greater instructional equalities for all primary-aged children with enhanced emphasis placed upon classroom freedoms, child health and character training in the interests of promoting national efficiency.

THE 1929 PRIMARY SCHOOL SYLLABUS

The purpose of re-casting the primary school syllabus in 1929 appears to have been to improve equality opportunities and, by implication, educational efficiency. The 1929 syllabus concentrated upon updating all curriculum areas in the primary school sector in an effort to allow greater instructional ‘freedom’ and to promote the development of ‘thinking’ ‘feeling’ citizens at the primary school level.\textsuperscript{145} To achieve these ends, the Syllabus
incorporated notions such as collective social responsibility, character training for national
pride, and the promotion of ‘brighter’ children to higher educational levels within the
school. Modelled upon a child-centred philosophy wherein the ‘needs’ and ‘capacities’ of
learners were to be foremost considerations in primary education, the curricula was
structured so as to cater to the talents of every child. Self-expression was now seen to be as
important as rote-learning music had once been. As it was conceived,

Every child, especially those with musical ability, should be led to realize that
anybody may compose or “make up” music, as did the peasants and workers of
bygone days... It does not matter how many different tunes you make up, there is no
limit set to free invention, any more than there is to the growing of flowers in
peoples’ gardens. In this way the power of art as an aid to self-realization and self-
expression is felt and used, and the well-spring tapped which will give our country
its own musical literature in course of time. 147

In the education of girls, the needlework syllabus was designed so as to enhance the
instructional value of the subject; tapping into the various skills of students was now as
important as the finished needle-point product. Providing multiple needlework experiences
through the production of many items (as opposed to just one) appeared to be the means by
which girls could further be extended in this craft. Planning the syllabus in this way was
deemed educationally efficient: not only did it acknowledge the uniqueness of every student
but also, “if intelligently taught” , would develop in those of varied capacities:

constructive ability... artistic feeling and individuality...[the scope] to think clearly,
to plan and construct...to develop resourcefulness, initiative, perseverance, and self-
reliance...[with the end object being that] the value of good honest work [is] learnt
even if the skill acquired is not very great. 149

Further force was given to this curricula modification by allowing those girls who took
needlework to be exempt from mathematical studies at their teachers’ discretion. However,
as Cumming and Cumming have noted, some of the “enjoyment and honest utility must
have been lost: when teachers were expected to ensure that it developed female

146 Ibid., pp. 64-66
147 Ibid., p. 197.
148 Ibid., p. 194.
149 Ibid.
resourcefulness, initiative, perseverance and self-reliance.” Indeed, structuring the course in this way merely guaranteed that the traditionally efficient male-female subject division was effectively endorsed. Nevertheless, the modified needlework syllabus was accepted as a new sort of educative ‘liberation’ for those girls taking this subject rather than being seen as a constrictive barrier to mathematical courses.

Educative ‘freedom’ was also extolled as the most effective way of teaching students in the more basic areas of reading, writing and arithmetic. The study of English grammar, for example, was geared to incorporate this new type of independence in that the systematic and “intelligent study of good models” was to supplant the staid practice of simply “memorizing grammatical rules”. Lessons were now to be adapted to take account of individual classroom circumstances and teachers were encouraged to design reading and writing programmes to cater for their own classes. To endorse this new instructional freedom, the syllabus purposefully refrained from recommending particular reading and writing schemes. It was, as McLaren has claimed, an attempt to restore in primary schooling a more relaxed but equally effective atmosphere wherein teachers were given back “much of the initiative filched from them in the preceding few years.” Teachers were to use their training and understanding of their own class(es) to ensure that every student under their tutelage was given “sufficient freedom to exercise their natural talents”. The importance of the child-centred philosophy in this syllabus was clear: it sought not only to challenge the supremacy of the old, antiquated ‘rote-learning’ technique but also to promote greater educational equality for all children through improved instructional ‘freedoms’ at the primary school level (which for the most part was free from the constricting influence of external examinations).


151 Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools (1929 Red Book), Wellington: Education Department, 1930, p. 7.

152 I.A. McLaren, “Curriculum Making In New Zealand 1877-1962”, In P.D. Ramsay, ed., Curriculum Issues in New Zealand (Yearbook of Education No. 8) (Wellington: New Zealand Educational Institute, 1980): 27. McLaren furthers this claim that the attempt to liberalise the curriculum through the 1929 syllabus was merely a “false dawn. The need to train pupils to surmount the Proficiency hurdle (Proficiency standards were raised in 1929) adversely affected the quality of classroom teaching...the whole life of the primary school was affected by an omnipresent leaving examination.”

153 Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools (1929 Red Book), Wellington: Education Department, 1930, p. 65.
The 1929 Syllabus noted that the character training objective could be modified by teachers to suit the varied visions of different sorts of pupils. The Report suggested that:

The whole of school life should centre in character-training. Every subject of instruction, and indeed every lesson, provides the teacher with opportunities for teaching right conduct and implanting such moral habits as honesty, modesty, perseverance. Games if rightly supervised enable the teacher to train his pupils to be self-reliant but at the same time to seek the general good rather than selfish ends, to be patient, self-controlled, honourable and fair to friend and foe. Incidental training of this kind is probably much more effective than set moral lessons, which tend to be uninteresting and tedious to children. The most potent factor is undoubtedly the personal attitude of the teacher towards character-training. If his attitude is one of half-veiled cynicism his influence is likely to be negative if not definitely harmful. The teacher should show in his scheme of work that he is following a well-defined plan even though he provides no set moral lessons. The programme in one class will differ very little in subject-matter from that of another; but the treatment should be adapted to the capacities and outlook of the pupils. 154

Pupil understanding and ‘growth’ within the character training programme was vitally important to the ‘good’ of the nation. In what amounted to an organic social efficiency schema, the 1929 primary school syllabus also emphasised ‘efficiency’ in its expectation that character training would inculcate within students a feeling of individual responsibility for the well-being of society. In the health curricula, for example, instruction in the morality of moderate alcohol usage encompassed lessons not only on the effects of alcohol on the individuals body but also upon the entire nation in terms of the “Wastefulness of excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages; the nation’s drink bill...[and]...Social evils resulting from alcoholic excess”. 155 The importance of protecting collective society was therefore to override the wishes of the individual:

The highest ideal is the individual responsibility for self-control under all conditions without the constant supervision of those in authority. The perfect system enables many boys and girls to acquire a sense of responsibility, and therefore with these it does provide a measure of training in the social virtues... The school training must therefore make the best use of the “group feeling” which animates the normal boy and gives him the capacity to conceive and promote the interests of the community. It must lead the child to express himself in ways making for growth towards higher moral ideals; it must strengthen the self-respect of the boy who from temperament or training is lacking in self-confidence; and it must cure the vicious boy of his anti-social opinions and actions, and create in him a sense of his social obligations.

154 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
155 Ibid., p. 61.
Opportunities for such training come through properly organized and conducted games, through social activities associated with the school, and through the inculcation of pride in effort and honesty of purpose in every lesson and subject taught. The social activities should relate not only to the school itself, but should extend in a measure to the surrounding community, so that children may realize the necessity for consideration for others, and for the spirit of self-sacrifice in the extension of social service.  

Archer has further observed that in order to mould young New Zealanders, the 1929 syllabus encompassed a new type of official, 'liberal' policy: citizenship standards such as human fraternity, international awareness and the acceptance of other cultures were now to be placed alongside the perennial character ideals of loyalty, duty, obedience.  

Notwithstanding this liberal blueprint, the dominating influence of the Standard Six Proficiency Examination meant that many teachers still gave "scant time to other subjects that might have caught the interest of non-academic pupils and opened up new worlds to them". This situation was further complicated by the teachers' lack of understanding and experience with the new primary school curricula. In point of fact, the revised syllabus did little to reduce the emphasis upon studying examinable subjects and only detracted from its original intention to supply *all* primary school children with a well-rounded education comprising all manner of courses and not just academically-oriented ones. Despite its adoption in 1930, commentators such as J.B. Condliffe, Professor of History at the University of Canterbury, still claimed that:

New Zealand has not kept pace with educational progress. Essentially the primary schools aim at elementary instruction in the rudiments of knowledge. There is little doubt that this aim is successfully accomplished. The average standard of knowledge is higher in New Zealand than in most communities; but the very uniformity of the standard, the disproportionate time and attention given to the tricks of arithmetic and the rules of grammar, the extraordinary importance attached even in the primary schools to examination results, and the almost total lack until very recently...  

156 Ibid., p. 66.


experimental methods, all betoken adherence to educational ideals which have long since been discarded in other countries.\footnote{A.G. Butchers. The Education System, Auckland: National Printing Company, 1932, p. 167. This extract is from Condliffe’s work New Zealand in the Making (1930).}

In hindsight then the object of this child-centred policy which so permeated the 1929 Primary School Syllabus met neither equality nor efficiency-oriented targets. Broader non-academic studies and lessons catering for individual students of varying abilities were given little attention relative to Proficiency-based courses at this level. Consequently, in spite of the intentions of policy-makers, non-academic children still were compelled to gear their studies towards such academic examinations as Proficiency instead of exploring and developing the full potential of their own skills and talents in other fields. The reality was that this was not \textit{efficient} education policy nor was it \textit{equality-orientated} because \textit{all} had to study along \textit{similar} lines.

Notwithstanding this, such was the level of excitement at the time that the reform was not considered ineffective or ‘unfair’ and against the shadow of economic depression and with the publication of the ‘Red Book’, it was touted as ‘progressive’ education policy. The experience of the depression altered this conviction, however and, as will be shown in Chapter Four, scarred the New Zealand psyche for years to come. Such experience substantially shaped the direction of educational growth in both the primary and post-primary sectors. The changing nature of primary schooling will be evaluated in these terms, with close attention paid to the modification and subsequent abolition of the Proficiency and Competency Examinations and the debate over the length of the junior high school course at this level. Within the post-primary sector, the arrival of the new School Certificate Examination and the growing acceptance of a common core curriculum philosophy will be just some of the movements to be assessed in light of the efficiency and equality arguments during the period 1930-1945. Furthermore, the findings and proposals of the Bodkin/Atmore Committee, and the Thomas Report will also be scrutinised carefully with a view to establishing the extent to which efficiency and educational equality were synonymous policies that had minimal impact upon those students at the top end of the academic scale.
CHAPTER FOUR


New Zealand...had been uplifted by the work of its pioneers and the humane legislation of its progressive statesmen; it would be even more uplifted by citizens of good heart and true interest working through an enlightened education system. The school could be made the greatest factor for good in moulding New Zealand’s destiny and the means by which children could be directed towards high achievement, not only for themselves, but for humanity. ¹

The period 1930-1945 was suffused by national and international crises which strained the communitarian fibre of the New Zealand nation. The experience of economic depression and the impact of two successive world wars had scarred the public psyche deeply and had left New Zealanders concerned and uncertain about their future. In the educational arena, government efforts to restructure schooling in the direction of greater working efficiency often were endorsed by those who claimed that such moves would better guarantee youth equality of educational and, by implication, social and mobility opportunities. The importance of educating the young for the national 'good' to ensure that successive generations had a more stable, fairer society in which to live was re-emphasised during times of crisis. The introduction of the new School Certificate Examination in 1934 and the common core curriculum (1946) reflected this concern. The response of government to such social dilemmas mirrored its anxiety to enhance what was seen as an already 'enlightened' education system through the promotion of efficient equality of opportunity education policy. Moreover, every New Zealand pupil was to be valued for his/her unique skills and talents. The question thus arose, however: Was the education of one student to be as equally valuable as that of the next? Public experience guided individual education choices. The still high enrolments in academic courses visibly challenged the workability of the system which sought to exclude some students from such studies. The situation was further complicated by the reality that the great depression of the 1930s had heralded the growth of student enrolments in academic streams so that they might better compete for valuable terminal and preparatory credentials such as the Matriculation

Examination. Social experience was educative and in this sense shaped the direction of schooling. Indeed, as Condliffe observed, "New Zealand emerged from the worst of the depression in a finally strong position, but with a substantial body of men on relief works and a people very much shaken by the rigorous and spartan experience they had been subjected to".  

THE 1929-1935 DEPRESSION YEARS

The impact of the 1930s world depression, wherein an overproduction of goods saturated global markets and reduced the demand for primary exports, was swift and far-reaching in New Zealand. As a nation heavily dependent upon the value and level of primary produce, the depression was experienced by almost every class of New Zealander and was for all intents and purposes a "great leveller". Indeed, such was the economic downturn that both the skilled and the unskilled, the white-collar professional and the blue-collar labourer were left unemployed and economically and socially destitute. The social dislocation resulting from the depression was as marked as the rate of economic stagnation.


3 G.R. Hawke, "Depression And Recovery In New Zealand", VUW Working Paper in Economic History 85/2 (June, 1985): 1. 36. Hawke concludes that the depression arose from international events beyond control of New Zealand which in effect, reduced the demand for home-grown produce and created marked export losses. Consequently, the New Zealand economy suffered although its "inflexibility... owed more to the limited nature of its non-agricultural resources than to a clear failure of entrepreneurial talent."; P. Fearon, The Origins and Nature of the Great Slump 1929-32, London: Macmillan Press, 1979, pp. 11, 27. Fearon adds that "Once the depression began, the manufacturing countries demanded fewer raw materials, and hence those producing them were forced to reduce their purchase of manufactured goods. As it proved much less easy to reduce the output of primary products than that of manufactured goods, surpluses mounted, prices fell further, the deflationary spiral gathered momentum and the world suffered from what Salter graphically described as the 'poverty of abundance'. Indeed, primary producing nations were in a state of delicate balance in 1929, dependent upon a continuation of the manufacturing boom and upon a continuing flow of international credit." It is important to note, however, that the overall magnitude of the slump experienced in New Zealand was much less severe than that in other countries like Germany, the United States of America, Great Britain and Australia.

4 T. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years, Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1974, p. 22. It is important to note that some people were affected more so than others during the depression. The experience of the very rich, for example, was that they could procure cheaper labour than had been previously possible from people desperate for the work.

5 Ibid, p. 84.
and worsened every year. As one oral history account of the depression revealed, "People whose way of life had been comfortable suddenly found themselves right down with us, and it must have been a frightening experience for them, and in another way, a valuable one... the slump had brutally swept away all their social distinctions". Such was the depth of the crisis that the egalitarian consciousness of many New Zealanders was challenged to the point where new allegiances were forged upon different issues, not the least of which was greater social efficiency for greater economic (and thus social) stability and advancement. Such eagerness for efficiency came at a time of intense national introspection when many New Zealanders realised that it was but a time-worn myth that sacrifice and hard-work alone could conquer all adversity. Confronting a host of officials at a relief deputation in 1935, one mother reflected the exigency of the matter in terms of social stability by outlining and linking national loyalty directly to the plight of her own poor brood:

You cannot be decent on that. You are starving us and hitting below the belt. I have to raise my son on rations as if he were a prisoner, yet he is a future citizen and soldier of this country. You might say one day that it is our duty to let these children go and fight for King and Country. What is a King and Country and a flag if your stomach is empty? You cannot expect us to teach our sons loyalty.

The pursuit of decent living standards was not so much a priority to the government as balancing the nation's books, however. Indeed, as Sutch suggests, the government was trapped by conventional economic wisdom which prescribed the brutal curtailment of spending to relieve the economic crisis. Notwithstanding the fact that by 1931 there were

---


8 B. Roth and J. Hammond, Toil and Trouble: The Struggle for a Better Life in New Zealand, Auckland: Methuen, 1981, p. 116. Despite the realisation that hard-work and sacrifice could not conquer all adversity the unemployed "fought back as best they could. They formed their own organisations, issued their own crudely produced news bulletins, arranged supplies of food and clothing and, on occasions, even attempted to strike on relief jobs."


10 W.B. Sutch, Poverty and Progress in New Zealand, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1969, p. 241. Sutch extends this line of reasoning arguing that Forbes' economic retrenchment policies were geared towards pleasing those influential within the British political establishment. Citing a Christchurch Press editorial, he wrote: "it will undoubtedly support the Dominion's credit and reputation at home [Britain], where both are worth money and a great deal more than money"
over 50,000 males registered as unemployed and that almost every occupation was represented therein, the government refused to accept responsibility for the welfare of these men and their families. Instead the legislature introduced work schemes (mainly in rural areas) for eligible family men and adopted a ‘No Work, No Pay’ principle. Seemingly oblivious to crowded housing, hospitals and the huge cost of human suffering, the Government’s economic programme reflected little sympathy for the bulk of those affected by unemployment. The leader of the Opposition, Peter Fraser, branded the government’s attitude as nothing short of shoddy and when discussing equality of sacrifice in the reduction of rental housing costs retorted, “Blessed is he that expecteth nothing”. In 1930, the secretary of the National Union of Unemployed also deplored the government’s inaction on unemployment and called upon the government to alleviate their misery:

We are going to pay you a sum of money which we know cannot possibly enable you or your family to pay rent, buy food, clothing, etc., in anything like sufficiency, but we are deliberately inflicting hunger and want upon your family so that the sight of their misery will urge you to seek other means of relieving it.

---

11 J.B. Condiffe, The Welfare State in New Zealand, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959, p. 34. This figure represents only those adult males who could register as unemployed in 1931. Women, youth and often Maori as well were excluded from registering as unemployed; W.B. Sutch, Poverty and Progress in New Zealand, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1969, p. 218; K. Harrison, ed., New Zealand Women In The 20th Century. Auckland: Macmillan Publishers, 1994, p. 37. Harrison notes that the failure to keep statistics on unemployed females during the depression reflected the general assumption that “every woman had a man somewhere to provide for her - a husband, a father or even a brother.”

12 R.T. Robertson, “Lessons From The Past: Unemployment During The Early 1930s And Its Contemporary Relevance”. Unemployment And New Zealand’s Future - Proceedings of the Second Social Policy School 16-18 February, 1979. P.Shannon and B.Webb, eds., (Dunedin, University of Otago, 1980): 25-26; T. Simpson. The Sugarbag Years. Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1974, p. 93. Rural-based work projects such as the infamous ‘Scheme Five’, were as one oral history reveals an effective means of social control: “young men and married men were put into these camps...[it]...kept these people out of the towns and to some extent of course stopped a good deal of social unrest by getting some of the active people into these country camps.”

13 T. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years. Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1974, pp. 94, 100. Government indifference was seemingly epitomised when Gordon Coates, the Minister of Finance, instructed the unemployed to eat grass. As one oral history account reveals, “Coates had made that famous statement when the unemployed called on him in his room in parliament. He said “You can eat grass”. Now I wasn’t there, and sometimes a man can make a statement in an absolutely jocular vein and not really mean it, but a hell of a lot was made of that statement.”


Still the government appeared indifferent to the social impact of the economic calamity. In striving to balance the budget, seemingly at any cost, schooling was treated no differently from any other portfolio. Against such an economically depressed backdrop, the Forbes administration aligned themselves with the ‘efficiency’ doctrine and began to slash financial expenditure in all areas deemed ‘unnecessary’ and ‘wasteful’ in the educational arena. The government’s anxiety to improve efficiency was underpinned by the release of the Atmore Report.

THE 1930 ATMORE REPORT

The quest for greater efficiency in schooling was exemplified in the title of the Atmore Report: Report on the Educational Reorganisation of New Zealand. The Committee’s brief was extensive: members were commissioned to examine and report upon “all matters relating to education and public instruction generally, the training of teachers, higher education, technical education, the education and care of mentally deficient children, manual instruction, and any other matters affecting education”. Their proposals, many of which centred upon the efficacy of centralisation and standardisation, clearly reflected the organisational problems arising from the increasing demand for further education in New Zealand. Members suggested, for example, that waste could be minimised if smaller schools in rural areas were consolidated which would not only save the government money but also drastically reduce the relative work-load of teachers in the higher levels of the school. Taking up this point, one Rotorua headmaster, A.R. Ryder, argued that science instruction beyond fourth form level would best be provided in a single consolidated school rather than in several separate institutions. He claimed that concentrating educational efforts in the one school would improve the efficiency of science instruction by consolidating the work of the small numbers of senior science pupils and maximising the use of laboratory equipment, apparatus and teacher expertise in the field. Such a scheme provided considerable


17 Ibid., p. 16.
economies in terms of both capital and annual expenditure and produced “better results”.\textsuperscript{18}

That said, however, there were limits to consolidation. The Atmore Committee recognised that consolidation alone would not guarantee educational and social advance because numerous changes, including an improvement of teacher competence across all levels of the New Zealand education system, were required for future progress. Indeed the Committee was careful to emphasise teacher quality when discussing the role of the junior high schools in New Zealand. They appeared convinced that:

every teacher should receive the best possible training for his or her work. The children of the nation are its greatest asset. To their care the present generation must shortly hand over the control of its destiny. As year by year the barriers between nations are lowered by the onward march of scientific knowledge and invention, we owe it to the rising generation to see that the equipment we give them for the battle of life is in no way inferior to that of other English-speaking children overseas. This equipment they must obtain in the nation’s schools, and the Committee, having recommended the establishment of compulsory intermediate schools... does not wish them to fail in their objective by reason of inadequate or inefficient training of the teaching staffs.\textsuperscript{19}

In order to secure this transformation the Committee suggested that all schools be unified under one controlling body so that a thorough system of salaries, appointments, teacher grading and superannuation might be established to alleviate the discrepancies already present in the school system. Grouping teachers under a single administrative umbrella, the Committee predicted, would not only save money but also secure a new and attractive form of teacher equality because all would be treated in a like manner (dependent upon their sex, of course).\textsuperscript{20}

Unification of education at the local level was also seen to offer a better synthesis, continuity and co-ordination amongst teaching professionals. Indeed, it was for these very reasons that the President of the New Zealand Education Institute, J.G. Polson, advocated

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 27. Furthermore, from a humanistic point, students advancing in the consolidated school would also be able to interact with more pupils of like age and at similar instructional levels than if institutions remained separate and student numbers at the higher levels remained small. Thus, once up and running, the system would benefit the individual, the community, and the State financially, educationally and by implication, socially.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp. 77-78

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 147-148, 153.
unifying the controlling bodies at the local level. He maintained that much more support, enthusiasm and assistance would be procured by placing educational power in local, rather than national, hands. Reflecting the opinion of many within the primary profession, Polson claimed that:

To give effect to the principles of unity of progress and continuity of curriculum, there must be a breaking-down of the barriers that separate the so-called primary schools from the so-called technical and secondary schools. In each district, instead of three governing bodies dealing with only a part of the work, there should be a single authority. In real fact there is only one work to do, and one body could do it much better than three... Given a single controlling authority in any area, it would be possible to arrange the work that the facilities available could be used to the best advantage of the pupils. A boy of mechanical tendency need not then be compelled to pass his time in the uncongenial atmosphere of the grammar school, nor would a girl with a leaning towards science be confined to the commercial school. The parallel course under co-ordinated control would give opportunity for changing from course to course as abilities and temperament and desires begin to declare themselves. A single authority would be able to take a comprehensive survey of the whole area under its control, and arrive at the best means of using the facilities available and estimate the need for development in one direction or another. It is not a matter of calling pupils “primary pupils” till they are eleven years old and then calling them something else, though some distinguishing term is certainly necessary: it is a matter of providing for all pupils such opportunities of finding and developing their real powers, their natural endowment of intellectual, moral, and social qualities, as will enable them to make the best of themselves for the community, and not, as is so often the case under existing conditions, a very poor second-best. Such a scheme means, of course, the welding into a single body of the three existing forms of governing bodies...The old tripartite system has had its day and done its work... Modern education makes an ever-increasing appeal to the hearts and minds of the people, and the system that is to recognize adequately that fact must give scope for and opportunity to all the thoughts and feelings and endeavours that are summed up in the term “local interest.” Local knowledge, local enthusiasm, local pride, offer a wealth of support and assistance that no wisely designed system should neglect. 21

The Committee was sympathetic to this line of argument and recommended that primary and secondary schooling remain under the auspices of local, albeit re-organised, education boards. Such confidence in the local boards, however, did not overshadow financial considerations: when comparing educational costs in Australia and New Zealand, the Committee discovered that education in New Zealand was funded at a rate nearly twice that of Australia. 22 Seeking to re-organise rather than to abolish the local education boards, the Committee strongly opposed:

21 Ibid., p. 44
22 Ibid., p. 40.
the abolition of all existing Boards, post-primary as well as primary, and the reorganization of the Service upon the Australian model - that is, a completely centralized Department in direct contact with schools organized under the control of local School Committees... being convinced that the public of New Zealand would rather bear the burden of the extra cost of the present system than change it for one of bureaucratic control, however much cheaper the latter may be. The Committee therefore set out to explore every possible avenue that might offer a prospect of reducing the admittedly excessive administrative cost of the system without sacrificing the principle of local interest and authority upon which it sets a very high value. 23

Similarly, in an epigrammatic fashion, the Committee also endorsed unified control of the inspectorate at the district level such that:

the present divisions of the Inspectorate be abolished, and a single Inspectorate be organized consisting of specialist Inspectors, the inspectorial staff within each Board district to inspect all grades and types of schools within the District, and to include one woman Inspector. 24

By arranging both the boards and the inspectorate in this way, the balance between local and centralised (national) control of education was effectively protected as committee members strove to maximise educational efficiency without de-valuing (or antagonising) the contribution of local communities.

To further improve educational equality, the Atmore Report also analysed the efficacy of tertiary education. Guided by its philosophy of unification of control, consolidation of classes and decentralization of power, 25 committee members sought to introduce greater working efficiency into the tertiary education sector by proposing a uniform salary scheme, smaller class sizes and a tougher entrance policy to ensure that ‘academic standards’ would more closely be aligned with those in British Universities. 26 These proposed changes, it was hoped, would work to re-model New Zealand universities upon those overseas and in doing so bolster the reputation, status and efficiency of work


24 Ibid., p. 147.

25 Ibid., p. 62.

26 Ibid., p. 149.
completed in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Remedying other problematic features, such as the lack of co-ordination between the university sector and the Department of Education as well as that of the industrial and scientific arenas, the overlap of services and the “harmful domination of the whole field of post-primary education by the present University Entrance Scholarships and Matriculation Examinations” were also focal concerns of the committee and as such their proposals centred upon the development of new initiatives to promote the elimination of waste through the remediying these so-called defeats conspicuous at the tertiary level.\(^{29}\)

The theoretical advances made in terms of the education of adolescents were also considered by the delegates. Linking a sound youth education policy to the attainment of social harmony and greater national efficiency, the Committee suggested that the school leaving age be raised from fourteen to fifteen years of age:\(^{30}\)

The desirability, from the educational point of view, of raising the compulsory school age to 15...[is]...most beneficial to the community, and the best possible investment of public money. “To close the primary course at 11 plus...and thereafter admit all of that age, would be a striking democratic measure, one of those epochal events comparable with the great Act of 1877 and the free-place amendment thereof in 1904.\(^{31}\)

Not satisfied with simply raising the age, the members also proposed that pupils who terminated their schooling at fifteen years of age should be compelled to take further (evening) studies in addition to their usual paid employment. Clearly, in the Committee’s opinion, schooling for gainful employment and social control were inextricably connected to the extent that further study would not only expand the horizons and develop the skills of young adults within their chosen vocational field but would also serve to create a better, more well-rounded, and disciplined worker. Implying as it did greater long-term benefits for:

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 148. This measure was a clear attempt to safeguard the status of the universities by limiting educational access to university studies - enrolments would decline owing to stricter entry standards and the marketability of such graduate qualifications would increase owing to the overall market scarcity of those engaged at this level of study.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 62.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., pp. 76-77.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 147.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., pp. 12-13. This opinion was expressed to the Committee by Dr. J.W. McIlraith, a senior school inspector in the Wellington District.
the wider society, the particular attraction of further study during this turbulent economic
time was that young people would at least be kept off the streets at night and out of trouble.
To facilitate enrolments in night-time education courses, the Committee recommended that
technical institutions be further developed for adult (working) students.  

In addition to continuing education courses, the Committee sought to promote
agricultural studies for greater economic efficiency through school-based policies. Given
that New Zealand’s national prosperity was contingent upon the level and quality of primary
production, the Committee observed that even in financially straightened times,
agriculturally-oriented courses should be the last educational expenditure to be slashed. Sir
George Julius, Chairman of the Australian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research,
put the point well when he commented that,

the public and the politician must be brought to realize that the stimulation of the
work of the Agricultural Departments ought to be the first consideration of
Government, and that these Departments should be the last to have expenditure
curtailed in times of financial stress. In fact, one is almost justified in saying that in
such times the work of agricultural research and education ought to be still further
extended, developed, and encouraged, as the best and safest means for assuring a
speedy return to more prosperous times.  

The Committee concurred with Julius’ logic and recommended that all schools adequately
incorporate agricultural-typed subjects into their curricula. The Minister of Education,
Harry Atmore, was especially pleased with this recommendation for he had long argued
that:

a fresh and definite orientation should be given to our educational curricula by the
inclusion of agriculture as an integral subject of instruction in all schools; for it is of
utmost importance to the welfare and future prosperity of the Dominion that the city
dweller and the professional man should become, though not agricultural workers, at
least agriculturally-minded members of the body politic...Rich and poor, high and
low, the conviction must be borne in upon our people that our prosperity, our
comfort, and the very maintenance of our standard of living depend upon the
development and efficiency of our primary industries...[t]here will be a growing
appreciation of the importance of the farming industry, and a keener desire on the
part of our young people to turn the land as a means of livelihood.  

---

32 Ibid., p. 98.
33 Ibid., p. 30.
34 Ibid., p. 31.
Indeed Atmore’s sentiments echoed his earlier address to the Wellington Education Board in 1929:

The unemployment existing in New Zealand today is very largely due to the fact that we have an academic bias in our education system. Unemployment is not a visitation from the Almighty; it is a plain cause and effect and nothing else. Academic bias has put into the minds of boys and girls the idea that they should be clerks and nothing else, and by their drift to the towns we are making the structure top heavy...At present we are combing the bright boys out of the country into the towns; but the majority of people must go on to the land if we are to do away with unemployment.35

In supporting the Minister’s position, the Atmore Report thus sent a direct message to students and schools alike: because agricultural studies were vital to the nation’s social and economic progress, these courses needed to assume greater importance within the mind-sets of individuals and educational institutions. By implication, only a few could benefit from concentrating on academic studies. However, as Openshaw et al. have noted, such advice did not sit well with the egalitarian nature of young New Zealanders many of whom continued to enrol in academic programmes.36 Indeed students and social commentators alike were simply perturbed by proposals geared to achieve such regulated non-academic ends. The head of the League of Nation’s Agricultural Service, L.E. Matthael, fully understood the importance of maintaining curricular equality for the rural pupil when he noted:

Rural bias, if it means keeping the population on the land, is really a sentimental enc pursed in defiance of a fundamental law in economics. Countryside education should never be such that the town and country children can be said to have beer. differently educated. Rural bias would be an injustice to the rural population by putting them at a disadvantage on seeking employment...The boys and girls in the country must have the privilege of the same education as those in the towns.37


36 R. Openshaw. et.al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1993, pp. 139-141.

However, the proposal to include agricultural studies compulsorily in the curricula of all schools was hotly contested in New Zealand. Commenting upon the proposal to introduce “adequate practical instruction in agriculture and allied subjects”38 in all schools, the Editor of National Education concluded that it was a blatant attempt “to exert a vocational influence upon pupils”.39 Many pupils responded to the Atmore Committee’s proposal by continuing to focus upon academic work; a choice that recognised that even in the depression-ridden 1930s, the ‘best paid jobs’ were gained by those with academic training. Not surprisingly, they demanded nothing less and their presence in the academic classes certainly testified to their conviction that studying such subjects would be profitable in terms of enhanced employment prospects, status, social and geographical mobility, and financial reward.40

Seemingly blind to the public’s response, however, the Atmore Committee suggested that a renewed emphasis upon the development of practical technical instruction was needed. In an effort to avoid wasteful overlapping between technical schools and the work done in the universities, the Committee proposed that “every effort be made to develop technical colleges as institutions for higher technical education for adults and adolescents in employment, and for the training of apprentices”41 and that “non-matriculated students of the University colleges be transferred as far as is practicable to the technical colleges, with the provision for the recognition of the work done therein, in the event of students subsequently matriculating and desiring to proceed to degrees”. 42

40 G. McDonald and R. Benton, eds., The Beeby Fascicles, Wellington: Te Aro Press, 1992, pp. 21, 23-24. Whitehead furthers this analysis by adding that New Zealand’s experience in these matters should aid in the educational reform of other developing countries. “Educational planners may think it irrational and a blatant waste of scarce resources to make provision for every child to have an academic literary ticket in the lottery of life, however long the odds may be, but that is basically what most parents want for their children and they will make great financial sacrifices to achieve that end. That is why it has always been so difficult, especially in developing countries, to persuade students to opt for technical as opposed to preparatory courses or to study technical rather than academic subjects. Nothing has really changed since Beeb visited the marae nearly half a century ago. Educators still sound unconvincing when they attempt to persuade others to opt for courses that they would never seriously consider for their own children.”
42 Ibid.
The Committee also recommended the appointment of technical educators and administrators to university committees and that a joint board be established to forge a closer educational relationship between the two different institutions.43

The academically ‘able’ were not overlooked by the Committee. Delegates suggested, for example, that university scholarships for the academically ‘deserving’ should replace the now outdated bursary scheme in which the less financially ‘deserving’ also won study awards.44 Members argued that in an era of increased pupil retention, such a scheme had become quite redundant and now called for change. Not satisfied with simply toughening up the bursary criteria (on a financial basis) though, they also suggested that school accrediting be overseen by the university councils since tertiary institutions received a large portion of those academic post-primary school leavers. The Committee envisaged that ‘fairness’ as well as the ‘maintenance of standards’ would be assured under these programme changes because the universities would be keen to deny the ‘unfit’ entry into their prestigious halls of learning.45

The Committee recommended that progress sheets and graded leaving certificates should also be issued to junior high school pupils to indicate to future employers or other schools the skills, aptitudes and personal attributes of pupils.46 In addition, the length of exploratory studies was to be extended from two to three years in order to ensure that all pupils would have the opportunity to discover and develop their natural abilities.47 Were this to happen, the Committee predicted that pupils ‘wastage’ would almost be eliminated:

43 Ibid., p. 148.
44 Ibid., pp. 152, 113. According to the report, those achieving highly in the examination system need not always receive a scholarship to the university. “It cannot help feeling that, as was clearly shown in connection with the scholarship system, many of the recipients of the bursaries are the children of parents whose position is such that State aid is neither needed nor warranted - parents who are well able to provide for the higher education of their own families. The Committee therefore believes that a system more on the lines of that recommended in the case of the secondary stage of education might be instituted for the post-primary stage as well, and that it should apply without distinction to students for all the professions and higher vocations, whether at University, or agricultural, or technical colleges... upon such conditions as the actual circumstances of each individual case may justify.”
46 Ibid., p. 150.
the pupils will comprise two distinct groups who may be designated the “continuers” and the “leavers”... [there is]... evident wastage due to pupils entering the existing post-primary schools and leaving without having completed any definite course. This will not obtain under the new system... those who are compelled by circumstances to proceed from the intermediate schools directly into employment will be far better equipped for the battle of life... and, moreover, that an increasing proportion of them will continue their education in evening continuation and technical classes. It also believes that... those who will proceed to full-time higher secondary education will increase under the new system, and that the secondary schools proper will be thronged with genuine “continuers” both better prepared to enter upon higher studies and more likely to complete the courses upon which they embark.48

In line with the 1929 Primary School Syllabus, a child-centred philosophy was increasingly finding expression in the primary schools. In like fashion, the Atmore Committee recommended that homework and corporal punishment be minimised in the primary schools and that the instructional benefits of physical education as well as annual medical check-ups at all levels of schooling be emphasised. The educative value of open-air primary schools for greater learning was also mentioned.49

The Committee’s concern to provide schooling opportunities to children with special abilities and/or with disabilities was also significant in that it echoed the view that people should be trained to use whatever talents they possessed. Every school child now was to be valued for his/her own uniqueness; respect for others had now become an integral part of the primary school curriculum. Remarking upon the benefits of training all school children, even the defective, for some type of community life, the report read:

Some of the children are definitely mentally defective, but still quite educable. Others are subnormal only in the sense that they learn academic subjects much more slowly than children of average ability, and consequently cannot keep up with boys and girls of their own age in the ordinary school classes. Through frequent failure they develop a sense of inferiority, which further aggravates their disabilities. In manual ability they are often much more nearly normal, and it is through manual work that they make the greatest progress educationally... After the children had attended for two or three years under a specialist teacher at the manual training centre, it would be definitely known which of them could be allowed to enter into the activities of the general community and compete with others in factory and workshop, and also which of the remainder, while not fit to go out into the world, would not be so defective that it would be necessary to send them to institutions for the feeble-minded. Some children, especially if they came from good homes, where

48 Ibid., p. 24.
49 Ibid., p. 152.
they were well cared for, might make very useful citizens if placed in an industry which was in some way protected, and where they themselves were protected. If sent into an ordinary factory they might be able to do good work, but in many cases would be made to feel their inferiority, and would become unhappy and wander from one position to another. In an occupation centre under wise and sympathetic supervision they would be much more likely to reach happiness and contentment. Even in the case of those children who are allowed to go into outside employment, after-care workers are, in the opinion of Mr. Strong, much needed to guide the children after they leave school, in order to help them to get employment and to see that the employers treat them sympathetically.  

For this policy to succeed, the Committee suggested that manual classes be extended for ‘special’ children and that “occupational centres be established for such of these children as have completed their school training, but are unable to compete in ordinary occupations.”

Along child-centred lines and within other so-called ‘normal’ institutions, the work and ideology of the League of Nations was to be central in the syllabus content at the primary level. Furthermore, teachers were to be enabled to travel overseas to gain greater international understanding and insight into other educational cultures and schools for the deaf were also to be better developed.

**POST-ATMORE DEVELOPMENTS**

However, the perilous state of the nation’s economy meant that many of the proposed changes were unable to be implemented. Budgetary constraints had pushed educational resources to the limit and had eliminated anything deemed excessively wasteful in the educational arena. The case of Wesley College exemplified this whittling away of educational means as the whole school came to operate at a “poverty level” with meagre supplies, few teachers and only half of its ordinary roll. In the wider educational arena other cutbacks were made: 1932, free dental treatment for children was abolished, teachers’ wages were cut, textbook and transport subsidies to post-primary institutions were removed and, as recommended by the government appointed Shirtcliffe Commission, five year olds

---

50 Ibid., pp. 128-129.
51 Ibid., p. 129.
52 Ibid., pp. 152-153.
were denied entry to the primary schools.\textsuperscript{54} As Simpson has observed, the education sector bore the brunt of the government’s financial retrenchment:

There were 1500 to 1800 teachers unemployed. Classes were big, expenditure was low, wages were cut, five-year-olds were kicked out... Chalk was also rationed ... Graduates couldn’t get a job, the training colleges were closed, lecturers were turfed out ... Everything was cut.\textsuperscript{55}

THE RAISING OF THE ‘STANDARDS’ OF THE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

The government made further cuts to expenditure by suspending accrediting for the Proficiency Examination in 1931 at the same time as it raised the level of the difficulty of the examination. It was an efficacious policy move which was favoured by those who argued that educational ‘standards’ were apparently falling. One such person was Robert Masters, the Minister of Education, who justified elevating the difficulty of the Proficiency Examination by claiming that in different parts of the nation the standard of work was very “disquieting”.\textsuperscript{56} But his was not a lone voice. The principal of Auckland Grammar School, H.J. Mahon, expressed similar sentiments when he declared that the process of accrediting Proficiency had resulted in “deplorably low”\textsuperscript{57} standards throughout the post-primary school population. By implication then these critics linked a ‘stiffened up’ Proficiency Examination with greater educational efficiency, thereby saving money by efficiently ‘weeding out’ those students unsuited to higher studies. In a recession-ridden economy this idea was eagerly supported by senior treasury officials, politicians and spokespersons from commerce and industry.\textsuperscript{58} Equally important was the fact that the academically ‘able’ still were guaranteed access to higher education opportunities.

\textsuperscript{54} I. Cumming, et.al., History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p. 249. Legislation introduced in May 1932 (Finance Act) stipulated that no child under six years of age should be enrolled at a public school and that no teacher be legally able to receive an over-graded teaching salary.


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 199.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
This strategy of raising the ‘standard’ of the Proficiency Examination and abolishing accrediting appeared to have worked because the examination pass rate in 1931 was the lowest it had been since 1910. However, many educationists remained sceptical. The New Zealand Education Institute, for example, vehemently opposed the government’s proposals and lamented the cuts to education, concluding that: “It really is incredible that Education should have so few friends outside of the Labour Party and those engaged in teaching, willing enough to champion the cause of the schools and the children”. Their outrage was understandable: Proficiency had long been the ‘equaliser’ of ‘able’ working-class children and manipulating the pass ‘standard’ of this examination appeared to punish those children who had studied as hard as other pupils in more prosperous times. Oddly enough with the benefit of hindsight, the reality of the situation was shown to be markedly different. The pursuit of greater educational efficiency through the tightening up of Proficiency ‘standards’ remained for the most part relatively ineffective. As McKenzie has noted, the government’s strategy of ‘weeding out’ the new-defined ‘unfit’ pupils was short-lived:

What becomes clear from studying the record, however, is that the apparent conservative ideology victory in 1931 had very little impact upon longer-term school attendance trends and the development of increasingly liberalised secondary schooling opportunities. Indeed, the collapse of employment appears to have accelerated the growth in numbers of the adolescent age group who experienced some form of post-primary education... This does not negate the fact that thousands of children in a particular year were short-changed on their schooling opportunity, but it does indicate that an apparently overwhelming ideological attack upon schooling opportunity will be impotent if what it requires makes no sense of the conditions in which people must live.

Despite modifications to the Proficiency Examination, the inability of youth to obtain work further guaranteed that pupils would re-evaluate the worth of education and choose to stay longer at school. As the historical record reveals, increased numbers of students came to undertake further educational opportunities in the more prosperous years to come. Openshaw takes up this point when he claims that,

---


61 Ibid.
amidst the rapidly changing economic and social conditions of the interwar period, more and more New Zealand parents were coming to regard post-primary education for their children as a necessity rather than a privilege; a factor policy-makers could not afford to ignore.\(^{62}\)

In the meantime further attempts to control educational expenditure occurred in 1932 when new ‘Regulations for Intermediate Schools’ were gazetted which modified the ways in which the Junior High Schools were to be administered.

**THE 1932 REGULATIONS AND THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS DEBATE**

Gazetted in December 1932, the ‘Regulations For Intermediate Schools’ altered the instructional time frame by reducing course length from three to two years and lowering staffing and salary scales (in addition to changing the name of the Junior High School to the Intermediate School).\(^{63}\) The logic behind two year Intermediate schooling was outlined by T.B. Strong, the Director of Education, in April 1933:

If pupils remained for a third year in the intermediate school there would be a tendency for them to regard their education as finished at the end of their third year, and they would not be so likely to link up with the part-time evening instruction provided in the technical schools. The principle underlying the adoption of a two-year intermediate course is a very important one: it is that the school system should be so organised as to make education a continuous process. This aim would certainly not be realised by introducing into the system a school unit that tends to become an “end-in-itself”... The educational stream should not divide until the aptitudes and inclinations of the pupils have been discovered at the end of the intermediate school stage.\(^{64}\)

Believing that educational equality and efficiency could be enhanced by such an arrangement, the Minister of Education claimed that two years’ intermediate schooling gave pupils ample opportunity in which to display “natural aptitudes, inclinations and interests”

---


and teachers adequate time in which to ascertain whether students should proceed on to academic, technical, commercial or domestic typed studies.  

However, other reasons for such a policy have also been advanced: for example, that economic constraints during the depression may have played a part in the reduction of course length or that the high schools, anxious to retain their third form classes, pressured the government for such a change. Indeed, as Lee and Lee have observed:

The advantages of two-year intermediate schools were said to be many. First, since competition between the primary and post-primary schools for Form 3 pupils would be eliminated, administrative friction would disappear. Second, by retaining the third forms within the post-primary system, the need for drastic and costly re-organisation was avoided. Finally, with Form 3 pupils accounting for approximately one-third of all post-primary school enrolments, their removal from this sector would have resulted in much smaller, and presumably less efficient institutions. Moreover, the impact on capitation grants, staffing and salaries would also have been marked.  

Given that more than fifty per cent of children left school at around this time, the Intermediate School became for all intents and purposes an ‘end-in-itself’, thus demolishing Strong’s case for the two year course. The two year course was also attacked by the New Zealand Educational Institute which alleged that such a course was inconsistent with earlier educational policy wherein three years, rather than two, were needed to ‘discover’ and direct student aptitudes. The Institute also criticised the ‘unseasonable’ timing of the 1932 Regulations and claimed that Intermediates could not fully function in depressed times because cutting staffing and salary levels and reducing the course length would merely serve to limit the efficacy of these schools and so hinder their efforts to equally educate, sort and direct pupils into various life and educational courses (whether terminal or preparatory). Another difficulty arising from this type of policy was that the two year policy promoted early specialisation which was regarded by some educationists as problematic:

65 Ibid., p. 152.
66 Ibid., p. 155.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., p. 153.
Herein lies the greatest danger of the intermediate school. Given any encouragement, children of such varying types will specialize in limited subjects and quickly lose contact and sympathy with one another. The best way to prevent this is to arrange the curriculum so that all children work around a common core of subject matter to which the school provides a wide variety of approaches. The purpose of differentiation in such a scheme is not to make the children concentrate on special subjects but rather to approach a common body of knowledge from the angle that each one finds easiest and most natural. Of what should this common store of knowledge and experience consist? Obviously there is no place here for the special techniques demanded in certain occupations and certain social classes. I am of the opinion that its subject matter should be society, the ways in which human beings live together in communities. Education at the intermediate stage should be for citizens as such, and the proper study of the citizen is citizenship in its widest sense...I can see a real need for the understanding of the fundamental structure of society as a preparation for citizenship.  

In the face of a huge population shift from rural to urban localities (as people desperate for work sought employment in the cities), the notion of communal learning for the promotion and maintenance of social harmony seemed quite appealing. Training children to become effective and loyal citizens through common educational experiences over a three year period was regarded by educationists like Beeby as being of paramount importance in an era tainted by economic crises and an apparent rise in the number of crimes committed by juvenile delinquents. With the knowledge of prior technological advance on their side, such commentators urged pupils not to specialise too early in any one educational field because such work was thought to be socially divisive and at the very least could be jeopardised, superseded and supplanted later by improvements in technology. Further opposition to the two year intermediate course came from the Primary School Headmasters’ Association which expressed concern about the probable impact of this upon decapitation at the primary school level. Struggling to keep their schools afloat, these teachers were deeply suspicious of the government’s motives and had difficulty believing


72 T. Simpson, The Sugarbag Years, Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1974, p. 69. Whether crimes committed by juvenile delinquents actually rose is a matter for debate given the probable discrepancy between those crimes reported and unreported in New Zealand at the time. However, as Simpson’s work implies, the depression highlighted the plight and indeed heightened the awareness of the presence of young people in society - “The Depression was also very bad for teenagers, they were among the people hardest hit by all this. There were no jobs for them and they walked round doing nothing as there was nothing for them to do.”

that in these thoroughly depressed times, social (rather than financial) considerations in the schooling of individuals were the only catalysts in decisions regarding educational policy. From the primary schools' point of view, this cynicism was well founded and seemingly reinforced in 1933 when the Chamber of Commerce announced that:

it was a matter for serious consideration whether after passing the fourth standard...children of but moderate mental development should not be definitely prepared for the type of work to which their mental capacity and natural ability make them best suited. It might be that future education along general lines would not fit them for the modest role nature intended them to play in life.74

Despite strong opposition to early education specialisation, the government proceeded to implement these Regulations. But before the depression was to end, the government again found itself championing the introduction of yet another unpopular education measure - the School Certificate Examination.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION, 1934

The School Certificate Examination was another efficiency measure introduced in schools in 1934. Because the majority of students from technical and secondary schools did not proceed onto the university, the School Certificate Examination was fashioned to effectively fill a gap in the education market and to cater for those pupils who would leave school immediately after their third year (Form Five) of post-primary schooling. It was to be awarded to those students who terminated schooling later than early third and fourth form leavers but earlier than their university intended counterparts, and indicating that its holder had satisfactorily completed "a good course of work...at the post-primary level", 75 few secondary school fifth formers actually entered for the examination. As Clapp’s research has revealed, "Early school leavers and students who intended to take more academic University orientated courses were not supposed to be candidates for School Certificate". 76

74 G. Faulds, “Mental Testing and Social Selection: a study of the use of intelligence and attainment tests to select children for streamed classes at the Kowhai Junior High School 1922-1937”, Mental Testing in New Zealand: Critical and Oppositional Perspectives, M.Olssen, ed., (Dunedin, University of Otago, 1988): 94. This extract was taken from a publication of the Christchurch Daily Times, 8/12/34.


76 Ibid.
For this reason, the introduction of the new examination was even supported by some of those in Opposition such as Peter Fraser. He endorsed the measure because it aligned with the new spirit of liberalism in that it offered 31 examinable subjects and as a result was supposed to free up the post-primary education system from the dominance of the University’s Matriculation Examination. The logic behind such support was clear: by winning School Certificate pupils studying at the higher levels along technical, domestic, art and commercial lines would have their achievements as recognised as those taking the more traditional academically-oriented Matriculation subjects. Consequently success in the School Certificate Examination was equated with the equality motive by accepting, acknowledging and extending the talents of those not destined for university study. In these depressed times it was the means by which efficient education policy could duly be promoted and effectively endorsed. However whilst the School Certificate Examination should have proved popular with students cowing to the wide variety of subjects included therein, the majority of pupils still sought to win Matriculation. Not confident in the general marketability of the examination as a work credential these ambitious individuals shied away from the School Certificate option, preferring instead to sit the long-standing, well-known Matriculation Examination. Depression experiences shaped their response and meant that students coveted the Matriculation Examination as it fulfilled both terminal and preparatory requirements:

the Matriculation Examination had never functioned exclusively as an entrance test; it had been used, with full University approval, not only as an authoritative external test of the work of the fifth form since at least as early as 1888 but also as a high-status school-leaving qualification.78

That Matriculation was the more popular choice stemmed from the simple failure of government to separate and hierarchically rank the two examinations - the result being the

77 I. Cumming et al., History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, pp. 255-256; NZFD 1936. Vol. 245, p. 534. Fraser stated “The curriculum of the secondary schools is so framed that the Matriculation Examination, giving entrance to the university, will be passed by pupils. The value of the School Leaving Certificate is a matter we cannot fairly judge yet, because it only came into operation in 1936...[actually 1934]...But, apart from the merits or demerits of this or that examination, the question arises whether the time has not arrived for removing all examinations that act as a barrier to any child’s progress in education.”

out and out rejection of an exclusive and supposedly equally difficult School Certificate option:

Put to the test, the School Certificate Examination quickly proved unable to match the status of the Matriculation Examination. Approximately 18 times as many candidates entered for the Matriculation Examination as did those for School Certificate. The obvious market preference for the Matriculation Examination was the result of candidates rejecting a terminal examination of dubious status in favour of an examination which had been operating for 62 years and which had an established reputation.79

Even Parr’s announcement in 1935 that School Certificate could be held “conjointly”80 with Matriculation did nothing to discourage the majority of pupils from entering for the Matriculation Examination. As Clapp has observed, those who did sit the School Certificate Examination did so “just in case they failed to pass University Entrance”.81 Certainly, students, parents and employers alike all regarded Matriculation as the hallmark of sound secondary schooling and School Certificate as little more than a “failed university entrance”.82 Even by 1939 efforts to more fully recognise and reward the holders of School Certificate with higher salaries and status in the government departments still could not dissuade the majority from the well-tread Matriculation path.83 Other private sector employers also were loath to accept School Certificate as a terminal credential of equal value to that of Matriculation. Such people supplied potential employment opportunities and it was their adherence to Matriculation as a general and marketable work credential which directed that route of students at the terminal level. Certainly then it appeared that

79 Ibid., pp. 170-171.
81 Ibid., p. 3.
83 D. McKenzie, e. al., Scholars or Dollars? Selected Historical Case Studies of Opportunity Costs in New Zealand Education, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996, pp. 171-172. New Zealand Education Institute president D.C. Pryor was dismayed by such a reaction and concerned about government departments employing those holding a Matriculation pass and above those with School Certificate. He wrote to the Commissioner: “The Executive is very much concerned that such an important and influential employing authority as your own office should lower the status of the School Certificate by making provisions of appointment which suggest that the standard for attainment for School Certificate is of less value than that for University Entrance...The new examination...is worthy of the support of every employers and particularly of the government itself in its capacity as employer of Public Servants. For that reason I am directed to ask for your assistance in giving the School Certificate its proper status.”
the introduction of the School Certificate Examination was "nothing short of a disaster" for not only did it fail to provide any 'relief' to the Universities which alleged that high Matriculation passes equated to a lowering of 'standards' but it also was ineffectual in terms of promoting entry into an examination geared towards those higher school leavers in well over two-thirds of (State) secondary schools. According to McKenzie the reason for this was obvious:

It was now clear to the public therefore that while the two examinations were ostensibly of equivalent standard, they were, in fact, markedly different and intended to be so. School Certificate was unashamedly a terminal school-leaving examination targeting at non-university aspirants who wanted 'tangible evidence that they had undertaken satisfactorily a good course of work in a post-primary school', while a Matriculation pass indicated that the holder had attained 'a set standard of scholarship' prior to entering university. It was this deliberate attempt at differentiating between 'terminal' and 'preparatory' pupils that constituted the rationale behind the School Certificate Examination... What remained to be seen was whether the public would vote with its feet for the new examination and thus protect the assumptions of university interests that they were the guardians of 'high-status' knowledge.

The consequent co-existence of two apparently equally valuable but quite different examinations was difficult for students, parents and employers to accommodate.

Certainly that fact that School Certificate needlework, typing and shorthand were supposed to be assessed like other university entrance subjects belied the fact that it was as equally valuable as the highly academic Matriculation Examination. Conclusively then it appeared that unlike the originators and university supporters of the School Certificate Examination, post-primary pupils had little to gain by backing what they perceived as being a dud test. Accordingly the governments attempt to bolster the efficiency of post-primary education by providing a unique examination which recognised skills and aptitudes in areas

85 A.E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, pp. 133-134.
87 I. Cumming et al., History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p. 254. "The standard was to be that of University Entrance - a consideration which must have baffled the examiners in needlework, shorthand and typing."
other than traditional academic ones was an utter failure.\textsuperscript{88} Such open educational differentiation did not sit well with the New Zealand public’s egalitarian culture and as a result the majority of post-primary students regarded the School Certificate Examination with suspicious disdain, surmising it merely as an attempt to limit their own access to the valuable Matriculation Examination. Thus, as a policy innovation School Certificate was a decided flop and by 1942 efforts to alter its disastrous history were well under-way.

\textbf{A LABOUR VICTORY}

Prior to this revival, however, much was to change on the political front. The Labour Party’s sweeping victory over the Coalition Government in the 1935 general election issued in a new approach to the social and educational problems that had baffled those in Government during the depression years.\textsuperscript{89} Not surprisingly, the Labour Party’s promise to guarantee

- prices for farmers, an adequate living for all through higher wages, re-employment of the unemployed in steady jobs as soon as possible; a higher and wider standard of education; a National Health Service, with maintenance for the sick and their dependents; superannuation for all at the age of sixty; extension and encouragement of the Dominion’s secondary industries; and the control of credit and currency by the State to enable this policy to be carried out,\textsuperscript{90}

was popular with the vast majority of voters, many of whom had suffered extreme hardship in the depression years and who now looked to Labour for a change in their fortunes. Indeed, it was the Party’s programme to re-build the nation to a point of greater working efficiency on the basis of the ideals of social justice which proved irresistible. Precisely this point was made in an article written (by Peter Fraser) for the Labour Press entitled ‘The Job Ahead’:

\begin{quote}

\textbf{[Footnote]}\textsuperscript{89} J. Thorn. \textit{Peter Fraser. New Zealand’s Wartime Prime Minister}, London: Odhams Press, 1952, p. 122. According to Thorn, “The election results were sweeping. The Labour Party won 53 seats, the Coalition or Nationalists 19, and of the eight others elected two were Maoris, who attached themselves to the Parliamentary Labour Party”.

\textbf{[Footnote]}\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid}.\end{quote}
But the hardest job lies ahead... The intricate and delicate machinery of the present economic system must be handled carefully in an effort to benefit the mass of people... The first duty of a Labour Government was to those most in need of help - the unemployed workers and their families. Labour is marching on the way to a brighter future. Let us go forward with fitting humility, and with a due sense of our great responsibility, but also with courage, determination and efficiency to our great task of building Jerusalem in our most green and pleasant land.  

With memories of economic depression and human suffering firmly in their minds, the New Zealand egalitarian public had no difficulty in accepting such a scheme. Keith and Ridge summed up the situation thus:

New Zealanders... did not want extremes of anything. They wanted a decent, caring society, which would give everyone a fair go, where everyone had a job and where there was no poverty of want. They wanted their children to be happy and healthy and well-educated and they wanted their elderly to live in dignity.

In the educational arena this was translated to mean that progressive, effective school policies necessarily had to benefit the mass of pupils (not just a selected, elite, rich few). Such was their reformist zeal that debates in the House to recast the education system to a point of greater working efficiency often emphasised the development of schooling to equalise pupils opportunities. As Benton noted, “Labour was the party of economic and social equality, and greater educational opportunity was the main means of achieving it”. By the December of 1935, for example, five years olds were re-admitted into the primary school classrooms and class sizes began to be reduced. In the following year teachers salaries were restored; a teachers training college was reopened; college students were given higher teacher training allowances; free school books were provided to post-primary students; and a boarding allowance for those enrolled at schools away from home was introduced. This type of liberal philosophy was to dominate the decade 1935-

---

91 Ibid., p. 123.


1945 and it was reflected as early as 1936 when debate over the educational efficacy of the school system arose in the House directly and as a consequence of the release of the Director of Education’s 1935 Report

THE 1935 DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONS REPORT - DEBATED IN THE HOUSE

Released under the directive of a newly-elected Labour Government, this report dealt with many of the educational issues that had been mooted over the last decade. The recommendations which were debated in the House focused almost entirely upon enhancing educational efficiency to enable the promotion of greater educational opportunities to the nation’s children. To achieve such goals the report mirrored earlier educational proposals by recommending that agricultural-typed subjects be better emphasised; that examinations be de-emphasised in terms of the importance it played in the school syllabus; and that better teaching staff be acquired through tougher entry and training standards.\(^96\) It also assessed the merits of the Junior High School system and intelligence testing.\(^97\) Such an exposition laid open greater social questions regarding the type of society New Zealanders wanted to create for themselves. Equality goals and efficiency-newspeak dominated such discussion and this was exemplified in the House by Bodkin, the Member of Parliament for Central Otago. He regarded the report in a very favourable light and fully endorsed the opinion that the consolidation of rural schools and the growth of intermediate schools had advanced the progressive course of national education in New Zealand.\(^98\) “In every Department”, Bodkin stated, “there arrives the time when there should be a stock-taking, and when that time arrives the best thing to do is to send officers to other countries to contrast the methods adopted in those countries with the methods adopted in this country”.\(^99\) Other parliamentarians, such as Wilson, the Member for Rangitikei, were not so magnanimous with their praise, however, and branded the overseas sojourn nothing but a waste of taxpayer funds. “My feeling in reading the report”, he said, “was that it was unnecessary for the Director of Education to have made a world tour in order to have put forward the

---


\(^{97}\) Ibid., pp. 513-520.

\(^{98}\) Ibid., pp. 516-517.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 518.
comparatively minor improvements that are suggested". The Reverend Clyde Carr, the Labour Member of Parliament for Timaru, also echoed similar sentiments. Whilst conceding that the report made interesting reading, Carr remained convinced that the “Director of Education was too near the scene of operations to stand off and see things in their correct perspective...[concluding that it was]...impossible in these circumstances to see the wood for the trees.” Interestingly, however, both critics strongly disagreed with the some of the findings and suggestions made in the report. Carr, for example, strenuously opposed the notion that the length of intermediate schooling be two years only and questioned the wisdom of such an option in terms of educational efficiency and the provision of greater opportunities within these types of schools. He declared:

I think that that would be regrettable even in the case of those pupils whose aptitudes and inclinations are clearly displayed within that time. I doubt whether the best vocational guidance officer, the best teacher, and the best parent, getting together in twelve months, could hope to evaluate the aptitudes and possibilities of the average boy or girl. Even with the best modern intelligence tests and with the best modern equipment I doubt whether one could possibly assess the possibilities and judge the aptitudes and inclinations of any boy or girl after twelve months' observation. Two years would be little enough.

Wilson further lent weight to this critique, claiming that that the best way to forge a progressive system was to promote general rather than specialised intermediate studies for as long as was practically possible: “The longer we can give them on general subjects surely the better for them as individuals and as citizens in their future life.” Such logic was highly appealing at a time when concern surrounding the productivity and efficiency of the nation pervaded the political psyche. Wilson made this connection abundantly clear:

This Government is very much concerned to see that we provide the maximum of opportunity for every one. That must start, in the first place, in the economic sphere

\[100\] Ibid.
\[101\] Ibid., p. 513.
\[102\] Ibid., p. 514.
\[103\] Ibid., p. 520.
\[104\] NZPD. 1936. Vol. 247., p. 961. That concern for national efficiency pervaded the political psyche was exemplified by the second reading of the bill on industrial efficiency which was carried by a majority of 11. It seemed that the majority were convinced that “Industry is the life-blood of this country, and our future will depend upon the measure of efficiency that we have in industry”.
with decent living conditions, and then, secondly - what is probably more important - it means providing the best possible education and the best possible opportunities in education. That is what we are concerned with, and that is what this Government intends to work out. 105

The ideology behind such a conviction was unmistakably Taylorism - i.e. that the best and the most effective social system would be created only when the best (that is, synonymous with the right) educational or training opportunities were provided to people. Indeed, when discussing the report, other political opinion was also saturated with similar sentiment. This was typified by Smith, the Member of Parliament for New Plymouth, who upon noting the concern over the falling birth-rate restated the Director's view that "No system of education can be perfect and, at the same time, alive. It must change and progress to meet the needs and ideals of each succeeding generation". 106 To this end, he proposed that new appraisals be made to assess the working efficacy of

the payment of teachers, the staffing and grading of schools, whether the five-year-olds are still to be excluded, whether the school leaving age should be increased to fifteen years, the question of a definite scheme of radio development in schools, the greater use of film, vocational guidance and vocational training, ...[and]...capitation payments to School Committees, Boards and other matters". 107

Indeed, it was in pursuit of such an efficacious end that McCombs, the Member of Parliament for Lyttelton, also suggested that the post-primary education syllabus be related more closely to the life experiences and vocational destinations of the majority of 'average' pupils who now attended these schools. 108 Disagreeing with the Director's Report which stipulated that "our secondary schools are in a large measure well suited to our requirements, and that they have given the majority of pupils a sound and liberal education" 109, McCombs stated:

The aim of the school system should be to turn out pupils suited to meet the needs of the community...There are many children in our schools following courses which:

106 Ibid., p. 522.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., p. 525.
109 Ibid.
bear no relation to their needs. Some 52 per cent of the children follow an academic course which leads to Matriculation, and 2 per cent of those children are going into professions. That means that half of the children in our secondary schools are following an academic course which should lead on to the university and bears no relation to their requirements. No one can pretend that our academic course at this present time is really cultural.  

Highlighting his point, and echoing Hogben’s sentiments nearly three decades earlier, McCombs drew attention to the fact that the Report paid sparse attention (six lines) to the importance of the two schools for agricultural education, in this, an agricultural-based country.  

Alongside the newly established (1935) Rural Mortgagors' Final Adjustment Act, a policy designed to promote agricultural work and retain efficient farmers on their lands, such an oversight in the Report was considered virtually unforgivable. Wilson, the Member of Parliament for Wellington Suburbs, concurred with McCombs on this issue and stressed that to be effective schooling needed to concentrate “on the subjects that are essential to everyday life - the bread-and-butter lines of education”. The idea was simple efficiency - because many more pupils of ‘average’ ability were entering the post-primary system, educational equality would best be procured by catering for the majority of ordinary students (as well as schooling the academic minority of pupils).

Atmore, the Member of Parliament for Nelson, added depth to this analysis. Whilst complimenting the work undertaken by the report, Atmore reasoned that sound education policy should “follow along the lines of the discovered aptitudes of the child”. According to Atmore, educational efficiency also demanded change such that the marks for the Matriculation Examination be allotted according to their perceived ‘worth’ to the New Zealand community. Arguing for a re-orientation to a point where agricultural studies might better be appreciated for their real value to the New Zealand economy, he stated:

The study of dead languages may be very desirable, but to force every boy through them, and to mark the importance of his study of Latin by having a maximum of 600

110 Ibid.
111 Ibid., p. 526.
114 Ibid., p. 528.
marks for that subject and only 300 for agriculture, the most important industry in New Zealand, shows that we have a wrong perspective of the relative importance of the different subjects...taught in our schools.\textsuperscript{115}

Echoing the 1930 (Atmore) Report, Atmore remained convinced that if educational equality was meant to 'draw out' the abilities and aptitudes of all children, then it must do so fairly. In practice, he interpreted this to mean that the value of academic subjects in schools, expressed through the examination system, had to be re-defined.\textsuperscript{116}

The relative 'worth' of teachers was yet another issue examined in light of the ideas expressed by the 1935 report. Carr conceived that progressive, child-centred education demanded that teachers be regarded as more than mere instructors and in this vein stated:

We should abandon altogether the name "teacher". Those people should not be teachers at all; they are not there to teach. It is difficult to find a word to suggest to them what their function really is. They should be leaders, rather than teachers - guiding thought, evoking thought, evaluating and developing the powers of the children, and bringing out what is in, rather than putting in something that is out.\textsuperscript{117}

Given that teachers were required to be 'expert' in the field of efficiently evaluating and directing children into different educational courses (and, by implication, along varied life avenues), it is not surprising that politicians were concerned by the type of person entering teacher training and the means by which such people were to be rewarded. Atmore took issue with this very point. It remained to be seen, he alleged, whether the salaries awarded to educators were enough of an incentive to procure the 'best' people for the job. He stated:

There has been much talk about the salaries paid to members of the teaching profession, but I am quite satisfied that they are inadequate. We cannot expect to attract the best brains and those best suited for the most important work of fitting boys and girls for their positions in life so long as the salaries of teachers remain low.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 529.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., pp. 528-529.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 514.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 528.
After a loss of a huge number of teachers who had been conscripted during World War One, and following a huge downturn in the number entering the profession during the economic depression, it seemed sensible to consider the payment of teachers in a more extensive light than had been examined in the report. Smith’s contention that the high rate of primary staff turnover caused a “great deal of harm” to many students who had been subjected to the constant changing of teachers added weight to this debate. Indeed, even his proposal to implement a modified, simpler method of primary teacher salary scales could not dismiss the general feeling in the House that is was not financially worthwhile to be ‘stringent’ with teachers salaries. 

Atmore articulated this feeling well when he declared:

Fancy “saving” on the most important work of fitting boys and girls for their work in life - in teaching them to live... the late Government took credit for saving [one million pounds] in education; and the ex-Minister of Education says that our education system came through intact. The Government prevented young girls and boys from entering at one end and pushed others out too early at the other end. The whole system was starved. It is starved to-day; and we look to the present Government, with so many educationists in its ranks and amongst its supporters, to see that more money is spent on education. We want more money spent on our schools, more spent on our schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, and less money spent on the sergeant major and drill instructor... We have, indeed, a long way to go before we get a perfect system of turning out men and women imbued with the highest ideals of citizenship, the ideals of service, and the youth of this country can blame us if we do not give them the right and adequate equipment for their future lives. New Zealand is the wealthiest country in the world, and, surely, we can gain the proper perspective and spend more adequately on the most important duty of all - fitting our boys and girls for citizenship and for life.

Having survived the war and depression crises Atmore was convinced that the time was ripe to spend more money on effective education policies. Funds no longer had to be directed into military-styled schooling in ‘drill’ and with the close of the depression, finance was now available to sustain a new and progressive education course.

The conviction that any money spent in education would be money well-spent provided the platform for Peter Fraser, the Minister of Education, to debate the Director’s

119 Ibid., p. 523.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., p. 530.
122 Ibid., pp. 529-530.
report and to highlight the plight of rural children in education and to suggest extending access provisions to the higher post-primary schools for all interested children. He asked the Members:

Has not the time arrived when any child desiring to go forward to a post-primary education should have the opportunity of so doing? If so, can we not apply the same principle to the pupil who desires to go on to the university? I know that even if those points were conceded we would not have equalised educational opportunities, for we have still to consider the situation of the country child. We have still to bring about equalized opportunity for post-primary education for the country pupil, and that can only be achieved by providing travelling facilities and, in some instances, a maintenance allowance of some sort...our children can be helped as far as possible towards an education that will mean giving them an opportunity to develop, particularly in the important matter of thinking for themselves.123

Fraser’s argument was that in prosperous times it made sense to spend money on the appropriate schooling and guidance of the nation’s young. Considerable economic and social benefits were implied by such policies. Carr also emphasised this point and cited part of the Director’s report to bolster his argument to improve the scholarship system. He stated:

“Our regulations provide liberal opportunities for pupils to qualify for further education at secondary, technical, or district high schools, but at present we are not doing enough to help those pupils who cannot afford to avail themselves of the qualification”. I must say I could love the Director of Education for putting that in...now we have neither scholarships nor bursaries worthy of the name. For my part I am all with bursaries...[because]...people who have been or who are, by reason of disabilities, economic and other,...[are]...debarred from rising to the full stature of their manhood in the world to-day.124

Carr, like Fraser, thus indicated that part of the quest to make education policies not only more effective but also more efficient included providing rural children with an equal opportunity to compete for successful examination results. Against the egalitarian backdrop of a changing government and the forging of a new, progressive and dynamic society, this was quite impressive since it was inextricably linked with the meritocratic ideal that given the right amount of effort and ability anyone could rise above their socio-economic and/or geographical circumstances and achieve under this scheme.

123 Ibid., p. 534.

124 Ibid., p. 515.
THE ABOLITION OF THE PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

Indeed, the meritocratic ideal held popular opinion such that by 1936 it had enabled the Government to re-evaluate the long-standing Proficiency Examination at the primary school level. In an era of economic prosperity, with the knowledge of growing, retentive post-primary school numbers and against a tide of social introspection wherein common sentiment called for all children to be appropriately educated, the demand for change quickly manifest itself in a debate over the merits of abolishing the Proficiency Examination.125

In point of fact, the idea to abolish the Proficiency Examination had been mooted several years earlier during the economic depression when, fighting the impact of retrenchment policies in education such as the exclusion of five year olds from the primary schools as well as the raising of the standards of a Proficiency pass, the New Zealand Education Institute had implored the Government to re-examine the impact the Proficiency Examination had upon the primary school age population. H.F. Penlington, president of the New Zealand Education Institute, was more than convinced that this test was antithetical to the promotion of sound education policy and in this vein he stated:

there is still the Proficiency Examination casting its baneful shadow down on the school, and detrimentally affecting school methods and school life. So much has the examination method engrained itself into our school life, both primary and secondary, that not only do many teachers find great difficulty freeing themselves from its clutches but many parents have come to look to the annual full-dress examination as the only bona fide test and guarantee of as child’s progress. The examination has to be passed, a battle has to be won. If the child is successful, his is the glory and victory; if not, defeat with consequent discredit.126

Notwithstanding his appeal, the Government refused to alter their examination policy and, despite its stranglehold in the primary school curriculum, Proficiency continued to be touted as a most efficient guardian of academic standards in the primary schools. As Dakin noted, financial motives were at the helm of this decision (made during the depression) because the

Proficiency Examination stood as “the last barrier to children’s automatic access to post-primary education”.\(^{127}\)

However, by 1936, much had changed on the economic front. In a markedly better financial position, the newly-elected Labour Government was able to acknowledge several influential arguments pertaining to the abolition of Proficiency. Firstly, as Penlington had recognised, the dominating influence of the Proficiency Examination upon the primary school curricula had made it virtually impossible to guide children along any educational lines which did not overtly relate to passing this test. This trend was particularly apparent in the intermediate schools. Set up as an efficiency measure to explore and extend pupils abilities and aptitudes these schools found it increasingly difficult to perform this established function since “the public’s and employer’s considerable faith in the Proficiency Examination as a hallmark of a school’s success meant that there was little opportunity for anything of an experimental/exploratory and non-examinable nature to be pursued in classrooms”.\(^{128}\) Secondly, by 1936, more children were achieving a pass in Proficiency, through an accrediting system which had been re-introduced in 1935, and the ‘worth’ of the examination as a terminal, school leaving credential had fallen drastically. As Lee noted,

[1]he case for the abolition of Proficiency was further strengthened by the market reality that the examination was now virtually worthless as an employment credential and as an entrance qualification for higher education owing to the liberal post-primary entrance policies in place by 1936...The clear implication of the increasing use of the Proficiency Examination as a preparatory test for junior free places was that the original terminal school leaving function began to collapse.\(^{129}\)

Clarence Beeby, then Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, had recognised this issue as early as 1935 when he had posed the question, “Examinations...Did their originators ever intend them to turn out in their present form, or have they, like so many other institutions, run away from their creators? How far do examinations do what they pretend to do?”\(^{130}\) Indeed, it was a timely question because Proficiency had become


such a recognisable goal in primary education that the number of children continuing on to
the post-primary schools made the test to select top academic students nothing short of
farical. As Openshaw et al. suggested, this trend merely reflected "the collapse of a once-
selective examination". 131

Despite the inflated nature of the Proficiency Examination, however, some
politicians and school authorities still regarded this test as both an effective indicator of a
child’s academic achievement and an efficient safeguard of primary school ‘standards’. 132 In
spite of their convictions, however, the Government, primary teachers, school inspectors
and liberals could not be persuaded to pursue any other course than that of abolishing the
test of Proficiency. Made in the name of equality the dumping of Proficiency was an
efficacious step because it ensured less educational waste in the primary schools and meant
that the curriculum could now be tailored to meet educational rather than examinable ends.
Such a scheme still reflected an adherence to the ‘whole child’ philosophy since the talents,
apitudes and abilities of all could now be effectively ‘explored’ at this level. Abolishing the
examination also signalled that the equality of opportunity ideal was now able to be pursued
on a meritocratic basis at the post-primary level because all able and interested pupils were
to have appropriate and reasonable access to those courses once open to only an elite few.
As Thorn noted, “The Act abolished the proficiency examinations as a condition of entry
into the post-primary schools, and with the qualification of an accrediting system threw
open free secondary and technical education to pupils to whom the examinations had
proved a bar”. 133 Openshaw et al. also acknowledge this view:

The abolition in 1937 of the Standard VI Proficiency Examination enabled more
Maori (and Pakeha) pupils to proceed without hindrance to one of the three types of
post-primary school - i.e. secondary, district high and technical high school...[with
the exception that]...for those Maori living in the more remote settlements, this
concessions was more theoretical than real since there were no post-primary schools
in the main areas of Maori population until the 1940s. 134

131 R. Openshaw et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand’s Educational History, Palmerston

132 Ibid.


134 R. Openshaw et al., Challenging the Myths: Rethinking New Zealand Educational History, Palmerston
Notwithstanding the Maori reality, this policy signalled that the Labour Government was more than willing to pursue an equality-oriented course along efficiency driven lines.\(^{135}\)

**THE NEW EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE, 1937**

The pursuit of such liberal ‘progressive’ education philosophy was further legitimated by a host of international education delegates visiting New Zealand on a New Education Fellowship tour. Organised by Clarence Beeby, through the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, the meeting was intended to “persuade more people to march in the vanguard of educational progress taking place in the wider world”.\(^{136}\) According to Beeby, New Zealand’s geographic isolation was fundamentally impeding the nation’s educational efficiency. The Conference was thus designed to provide impetus to the working efficacy of New Zealand’s system of education.\(^{137}\) Beeby, however, was not a lone voice in advocating such a measure. Duncan Rae, principal of the Auckland Teachers College, had also recognised the need for international dialogue on the subject of education and during the depression (1932) he had stated:

```
[I]isolated as we are in the South Pacific, with resultant strong parochial tendencies, there is a danger of becoming satisfied with our own standards in education...Our public has not yet realised the need for research in education and our potential leaders in this field lack the financial backing necessary to allow them to make advance.\(^{138}\)
```

Many educationists thus regarded the Fellowship as the perfect tool to advance the cause of educational efficiency. By way of the Conference, expert advice was to be given to and digested by ordinary New Zealanders. In Beeby’s mind, this forum provided an ideal medium, it was a way to expose the public to overseas developments and it offset the traditional practice of having such information assessed by a few solitary educationists,


\(^{137}\) Ibid., p. 45. On this point Blumhardt states: “Seldom has the vision and action of one man affected the lives of so many New Zealanders. Dr Beeby was that rare phenomenon - the right man, in the right place, at the right time.”

\(^{138}\) Ibid., p. 5.
whose numerous reports rarely entered the arena of national debate. Because public acceptance was crucial to successful educational reform, it followed that public involvement would necessarily help to shape and speed up such work. For this reason, Beeby, Fraser and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research lobbied hard to capture delegates willing to comprise a New Education Fellowship conference in New Zealand.139

Persuasive tactics won the international educationists over. Meeting in the four main centres throughout New Zealand, the Fellowship drew a multitude of prominent educationists from countries as far away as Canada, South Africa, and the United States of America (as well as Great Britain).140 The conference attracted wide public support and covered a vast range of topics, several amongst these, educational administration, agricultural education, the art curriculum, and infant schooling.141

Notwithstanding the huge range of ideas covered by the speakers however, perhaps the most significant concept was echoed by a general theme, present in all of the speeches which proposed that

education should at every stage be concerned with the child as a complete human being... and should not only be tolerant towards individual differences, but should adapt its methods so as to utilize these differences in the interests both of the individual and the common good.142

Indeed, it was with the interests of social harmony and national stability firmly in mind that speakers took the stage. Beeby acknowledged this when he wrote: “In most of the lectures there was an underlying assumption, common at that period, that education had a major part

140 Ibid., pp. 105-106. Beeby elaborates on this point to say that the New Education Fellowship speakers were “split into two groups, one half for the South Island and the other for the North. Week-long sessions of the conference were held in the four main centres. Peter Fraser closed the schools in each centre during the period of the conference, and himself regularly attended sessions in Wellington although he was, at the time, acting-prime minister... For some of the most popular subjects and speakers, hundred were turned away from the halls that could seat two thousand... Never before or since have teachers, parents and public studied education together with such passion”.
141 Ibid., pp. 104-106
to play in bringing about a better and fairer society."\(^{145}\) Kandel’s speech exemplified this point. An authority on comparative education, Kandel emphasised the connection between the fulfilment of individual talent and social stability\(^{144}\) and, like many other speeches, his was permeated by social efficiency-type doctrines because ‘progressive’ education (through reasonable curriculum access) was inevitably linked to the promotion of social justice and democracy. As McKenzie has suggested, whilst Kandel’s work “did not discount the need for differentiation of treatment upon educational grounds...it did fully imply that the schools (especially the secondary schools) should offer their pupils much more than the opportunity to come last in the examinations race.”\(^{145}\)

Consequently, with such great expectations entrenched in the outlook of so many New Zealanders, revealed by the popularity of the conference, attempts to successfully change school policies and practices could only mirror liberal and ‘progressive’ education theory. Beeby highlighted this point when he proclaimed:

> The conference revealed, both in the teaching profession and among the general public, a demand for change in the school system that was more intense than anyone had suspected. A theme that ran, as a continuous thread throughout the meetings no matter what the topic, was the need to cater for the individual student, whatever his abilities might be.\(^{146}\)

Such was the success of the New Education Fellowship Conference that it left an indelible mark on the shape, tone, and nature of New Zealand education. Equality of educational opportunity was now to be the essential philosophy that drove reform such that greater care and guidance was to be given to individual children so that their abilities and aptitudes might

---


144 D. McKenzie, “The Changing Concept of Equality in New Zealand Education”, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2. (November 1975): 102. “I. L. Kandel...declared at the New Education Fellowship Conference in 1937...the function of the school must be to develop in the future citizen ability to think for himself, to examine statements critically, and to reach a decision for himself...It is necessary to promote self-realization of each pupil in accord with his interest and abilities but directed to the same common goal for all - informed citizenship.”

145 Ibid.

be better explored, fostered and extended.  

Subsequently, by 1938, Fraser echoed the mood of the New Education Fellowship Conference when he observed that post-primary education was a right of all citizens, not just those among the higher echelons of society. In this vein he outlined the potential impact of future educative reform and stated,

[...] the structure of the New Zealand school system as originally laid down... was based on the principle of selection... Under such a system post-primary education was a thing apart from primary education and tended to be verbal and academic in nature. A definite penalty was placed on the children of the poor, especially those who lived outside the main centres of population... Education is no longer a special privilege of the well-to-do or the academically able, but a right to be claimed by all who want it to the fullest extent that the State can provide. It is only against this historical background that the Government’s policy in education can be fully understood. It was necessary to convert a school system, constructed originally on a basis of selection and privilege, to a truly democratic form where it can cater for the needs of the whole population over as long a period of their lives as found possible and desirable.  

THE 1939 FORMULA

In 1939 Fraser reiterated this view and, with the help of Beeby, now Director of Education, he declared:

The Government’s objective, broadly expressed, is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he be rich or poor, whether he live in town or country, has a right, as a citizen, to a free education of the kind for which he is best fitted, and to the fullest extent of his powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitudethat the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system.

In accordance with public demand, this proclamation redefined the equality of opportunity policy that had existed in the schools as it advocated an equal access policy to all post-primary schools. Scented with the fragrance of liberalism, this new course in education was eagerly supported by the public, many of whom had long called for greater access to the


post-primary arena. As Campbell noted, such a plan marked “a new period in the Dominion’s educational history”\(^{150}\) as the drive for *efficient schooling* now meant that irrespective of one’s background, any individual with the right degree of effort and ability could reach the highest levels in the education system, attaining great social mobility and occupational status.\(^{151}\)

Implying as it did different schooling for different types of children, the equality of educational opportunity programme still was confined by a greater quest for educational efficiency, however. As it had in the past, the most effective type of schooling was still seen as being that which would provide the most suitable type of education for children of different aptitudes and abilities.\(^{152}\) The only apparent difference was that the equality of educational access ideal had extended such provisions freely and into the post-primary arena. McKenzie recognised this when he wrote:

In some respects, this statement did little more than endorse the traditional equality of access to public schooling which had grown up post 1877...Hogben’s Free Place Regulations had paved the way to free secondary schooling which was now granted to all as a right. The more difficult issues lay in the latter portion of the credo. Upon what grounds was a child to be accorded ‘the kind of education for which he is best fitted’, and how was the imperative to develop each individual ‘to the fullest extent of his powers’ to be equated with the demands of the marketplace for certificated school qualifications, demands which had had such a deleterious effect upon the quality of schooling and parental expectations in the past?\(^{153}\)

Notwithstanding McKenzie’s analysis, however, in an era characterised by high pupil retention and credential inflation, this policy was commonly accepted as a most potent instrument of liberal, progressive and ‘just’ education reform. Higher education had finally

---

\(^{150}\) A.E. Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 68.

\(^{151}\) I. Cumming et al., *History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975*, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p. 219. The Scottish Education Act of 1918 served as a precedent to the Fraser-Beeby dictum. It provided free and compulsory schooling for all children up to the age of fifteen years and part-time education for pupils up to eighteen years of age. However, as Cumming et al. recognised, stringent post-war finances marred its full execution as national poverty prevented the implementation of “pivotal sections” of the Act.


become a right rather than a privilege (or, for the academically ‘able’ an act of charity) and because of that provision, all New Zealand citizens now had the opportunity to pursue their individual interests at the post-primary level.\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, such was its influence that the equalisation of access opportunities at the post-primary level was also assumed to enhance the economic prosperity and social well-being of all New Zealanders.

Evidently then, the equality of educational opportunity ideal was still driven by the quest to maximise the efficiency of schooling. As Renwick noted, the idea of making the most out of people’s abilities was a central feature of the Fraser-Beeby dictum.\textsuperscript{155} Indeed, equalising opportunities was educational efficiency at its finest because the policy was not designed to make every student’s schooling identical (nor, as it would happen, equally valuable on the credential market,) but it did give all students the opportunity to participate in, and have their abilities and aptitudes recognised and developed at the higher educational levels.\textsuperscript{156} Dunstall further claims that schools were now to be developed so as “to cater for the whole population...[offering]...courses that...[were]...as rich and varied as...the needs and abilities of the children who...[entered]...them”.\textsuperscript{157} This sort of efficiency-equality critique was also provided by Ballard:

The attainment of a level of education that is consistent with an individual’s ability is important for both the personal development of the individual, and for the community, which needs more skilled workers to fill existing positions and a ‘generally better educated and intelligently adaptable labour force to meet new demands’.\textsuperscript{158}

And, Beeby clarified this position when he wrote, “In no kind of society that we could foresee would equality of opportunity in education be fully available; so there was room to

manoeuvre under the principle for a generation". Consequently, the educational implications inherent in the Fraser-Beeby dictum merely endorsed the Secondary Schools’ Association 1936 expectation that to meet community needs it was “in the best interests of the education system that there should be variety in the school, some with one line of specialisation, some with another”.

THE IMPACT OF WAR AND OTHER SOCIAL REFORM ON EDUCATION

Meeting community needs had become a primary goal of the Labour Government during its first and second terms and its importance was further enhanced by the certain knowledge of international war. The threat to world peace had cast a shadow across the future of educational reform in New Zealand and also eclipsed a mass of other changes which had taken place in the social arena prior to 1939 aimed at creating a more humane and democratic society. Such changes necessitate review, albeit briefly, as they indirectly impacted upon and influenced the course of educational reform in New Zealand post-1939.

The implementation of the Social Security Act in 1938 was one such reform. The Act theoretically provided a range of benefits for the wider community, including free hospital treatment and maternity care. The Act overhauled the hospital, pension and family


161 J. Thorn, Peter Fraser, New Zealand’s Wartime Prime Minister, London: Odhams Press, 1952, pp. 139-140. The awareness of threats to world peace were known as early as 1935 when the Labour Government refused to aid Italy. Fraser justified the denial of supplies to Italy (the aggressive nation) on the basis that “the only way to uphold world peace is for the nations to combine in stopping supplies to the aggressor”.
allowance systems and introduced unemployment benefits and universal superannuation.  

It was, as Sutch noted, a revolution in the welfare system, undertaken with the specific aim of enhancing communal well-being and, by implication, bolstering national efficiency since through the process of State intervention, “Human resources were being conserved and developed by community action.” John A Lee, a contemporary politician of the day, described this well when he outlined public reaction to the announced welfare component of the Act. He painted the Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, as a man who captivated his audience with a summary of the proposed superannuation budget in the 1938 election campaign:

Now the Prime Minister outlined our promises. He spoke of the cuts made by the depression government, he talked of the need for adequate provision for the aged, the widowed, the invalids and so on. He showed a measure of skill in delaying the figure, but at last the hall and the immense New Zealand microphone audience were ready. “We have come to a decision about the amount to be paid,” and everyone knew that the amount paid would set the minimum standard for all pensions - war, invalid, miners’, widows’. “Now then!” As always, the audience roared. It was the Old Man’s trade mark. “We shall pay an age benefit of 30 shillings at 60.” Never in my life have I known an audience to erupt like that. In 1938, 30 shillings with generous earning and property allowances was a figure which led the world. The audience cheered, stamped, stood on chairs and broke into musical honours for minute after minute. The very real demonstration of affection went out over the microphone to listening New Zealand.

Elected once more into power, Labour’s Social Security Act was overwhelmingly popular and its social impact had far-reaching effects upon the expectations of ordinary New Zealand citizens. The Act demonstrated that the State now regarded the well-being of citizens as a public responsibility and this was reflected by the fact that welfare “benefits were to be ‘non-contributory, universal, comprehensive and adequate’, and were to be

162 W.B. Sutch, Poverty and Progress in New Zealand. A Re-Assessment, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1969, pp. 244-245. The unemployment benefit was extended to women workers, widows, orphans and those unable to work because of illness.

163 Ibid., p. 249; K. Sinclair, “The Lee-Sutch Syndrome, New Zealand Labour Party Policies and Politics, 1930-40”, New Zealand Journal of History, Vol. 8, No. 2. (October 1974): 109, 114-115. Sinclair adds another dimension to this debate when he observes that this social legislation was tailored specifically to win votes in the forthcoming election. He concludes that the “Lee and Sutch interpretations of these events are not fictions nor, apart from minor errors, based on non-facts. In general, however, they cannot be accepted as reasonable ways of looking at Labour history in 1936-40...In Simple on a Soapbox, Lee wrote, ‘The victors always write history to suit themselves’. So do the losers.”

provided by the state as a citizen’s right, not as an act of charity”.  

A new social philosophy had been introduced by way of the Social Security Act, which was “to provide a right for everybody from childhood to death to an automatic share in what the community produced”. Thus, unlike the family benefits introduced in 1926, (under the Family Allowances legislation) the traditional and all-defining principle of ‘desert’ had been surpassed by that of the citizens ‘rights’. Certainly, this ‘cradle to grave’ programme was designed to enhance individual well-being, communal harmony and stability and, by implication, social efficiency. Sinclair describes the history and intent of this policy well:

New Zealand’s social security system was shaped by the ideal of equality; it made men more free. Only a fortunate country could have afforded it, but it was not merely a by-product of reviving prosperity. It was created by the general will - a will which had sought expression from the earliest days; which had been inspired, in the colonial cradle, by the humanitarianism of the missionaries and by the utilitarian creed, ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’. The moral and social effects seem plain; they were almost entirely beneficent. Of the economic effects it is harder to speak… Certainly the volume of production per worker rose remarkably…Social Security…[was]…clearly an investment in the future personnel of industry as well as in the happiness of the citizenry.

Such an efficacious plan as conceived under the Social Security Act was eagerly received by the public. In the area of women’s health, for example, free health services, including guidance from medical professionals after childbirth, ensured a rapid decline in infant mortality rates. Indeed, concerned about the costly population decline during the period, the government “showed political sagacity…[by providing]…the maternity benefit for which there was strong popular support”. Human losses were also prevented with the availability of free medicines as the incidences of death from diseases of poverty like

---


diphtheria, typhoid and rheumatic fever dropped significantly. Thus, as a direct consequence of the Act there was a dramatic improvement in people's health and, as a result, in the overall productivity of the nation. As Condliffe understood it, 'progressive' measures on the health front "averted much economic waste".

Other reforms also demonstrated this changing government philosophy and had the effect of increasing public expectations in the social arena. The 1936 Agricultural Workers Act, for example, established minimum wage conditions for those engaged in rural work. The government also introduced the forty hour week, minimum living wage policy for all other workers, and made union membership compulsory. Such legislation mirrored "the Labour movement's desire that every person working at a job should receive a basic living standard from the production of the community". Further welfaristic legislation like the 1936 Fair Rents Act also demonstrated the government's commitment to social policy such that it appeared that New Zealand really was becoming a living utopia.

There was general pride in what had been achieved since the Depression...[we]...were equally determined that the 'better world' would be a reality this time round. We lived in a land full of certainties and we were clear about our values and our virtues. People were entitled to a fair go provided they did not draw too much attention to themselves, or ask awkward questions, or expect to be better than the next bloke. Certainly, everyone was entitled to a fair share. We were described in those years, by the writer Bill Pearson, as 'fretful sleepers'. It was an apt description...of the 1940s most were happy in a peaceful slumber they felt they had more than earned.

---


173 Ibid., p. 234; W.D. McIntyre and W.J. Gardener, eds., Speeches And Documents On New Zealand History, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 318-322. This desire had been expressed publicly as early as 1935 when Labour issued an electioneering pamphlet which accorded national prosperity with a guaranteed 'living' wage: "'to-day the Government says, 'What is the least upon which a family can exist?' Labour says, 'What is the most in goods and culture and leisure the State can yield to its every member?' "


Thus, it was against this backdrop of great (and growing) social expectations that the anticipation of war bolstered concern for national safety, in particular for the well-being of youth. In 1939 at the annual Labour Party Conference, Peter Fraser, the Minister of Education, had confirmed that the onus of national safety was to be placed upon the shoulders of every New Zealander:

Every one of us would be put in the first line of defence. And not only human beings but every atom of wealth as well. Automatically every person and everything in this country would be placed at the disposal of the State to give some service. We would be better dead than for the anti-democratic forces to come and crush us here.176

Notably, however, the welfare of youth remained such a paramount concern at this time that their accountability in this matter was not to effect their educational experience. In point of fact, so committed was the government to the efficiency axiom that future prosperity rested with children, that after even the implementation of strict rationing, the health of young people remained of vital interest to the State - the policy of providing free milk in schools, supplemented with a free apple a day for school-aged children clearly illustrates this point.177

In a similar vein Beeby, now the Director of Education, established the directive that “the chief business of the teacher was to act as a buffer between the war and the children and to soften its impact”.178 Responding to the profound experience of war, Beeby’s message was broadly accepted in educational circles, reflecting the view that social introspection had created a common and “deep sense of responsibility towards the young”.179


177 Ibid., pp. 143-144. Thorn implies however that this policy was simply borne out of a ‘waste-not, want-not’ attitude as “during the war...the shortage of shipping made the export of apples impossible,... [and]... the milk was supplemented by the free distribution to schoolchildren of an apple a day during the apple session.”


179 W.L. Renwick, Moving Targets: Six Essays On Educational Policy with an introductory essay by C.F. Beeby. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1986, p. xxii; D. McGill, Growing up in New Zealand in the 40s, 50s and 60s, Lower Hutt: Mills Publications, 1989, p. 7. Despite attempts in the educational arena to lessen the impact of war on the children - nothing could reverse the influence of home-
As a direct consequence of the war crisis the civic value of education now was also being carefully re-appraised by the government. Rex Mason, the new Minister of Education (1940), led this charge claiming that to preserve national freedom all New Zealand youth needed to be trained so as to have “a passionate belief in the fundamental human values for which democracy stands”. That the welfare of New Zealand rested with the proper schooling of young people was not a new idea but it was firmly cemented in the mind-sets of many politicians and educationists during war-time. Mason was convinced for example, that a common core of subjects in all post-primary schools would provide all youth with ample democratic feeling and an educated concern for community welfare. This idea had first been suggested in 1936 by Milner with regard to the academic secondary schools only but Mason believed that such an efficacious plan could now be extended to the whole post-primary sector. Obviously, from Mason’s point of view, if education was to be the most effective vehicle of civic instruction, it had to involve the whole youth community and also adapt to meet the social circumstances of the day. Indeed, according to Mason, educational efficiency necessitated that “every pupil should be able to take a course for which his own powers and limitations best fit him”. Certainly it was with such a vision that the Thomas Committee was established in 1942, (publishing its report in 1944).

life and in this respect one colourful recollection tells us: “My Dad dug a trench in case of invasion and my Mum sent food parcels to relations in England. There must have been much talk of Hitler and the Nazis, and I recall marching strongly on the ground in me wellies, expecting Hitler and co. to pop up at any minute. I remember my extremely nationalistic feelings that they had better not come to New Zealand, or else. Dad was in the Home Guard and the Papanui Fire Brigade (volunteers), too old to go to war, though he was a great fan of Churchill and Montgomery. We had a photo of Churchill in the house for years, with his famous ‘V’ sign underneath. ‘V’ also stood for our family name, so we felt quite involved.”


184 G. Lee. “Origins of the Common Core Curriculum”, The School Curriculum in New Zealand: History, Theory, Policy and Practice, G.McCulloch, ed., (Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1992): 110. As Lee observed, “In Mason’s view, proper citizenship training was assured with the Milner...[common core]...curriculum...Mason soon concluded that in order that social stability and democratic values be preserved during war Milner’s curriculum should be applied to all high schools...General education...was to have priority over specialised instruction and it was indeed now to be ‘the schools’ main function’.”
THE THOMAS COMMITTEE AND THE 1944 REPORT

Convinced of the need for more effective citizenship training, Mason and Beeby set up a consultative committee in November 1942 with the brief to consider and report upon the implications for the post-primary school curriculum of the proposed introduction of accreditig for entrance to the University and in particular to make recommendations regarding... The choice of subjects for the School Certificate Examination... The content of these subjects... [and]... Any consequent modifications of the Public Service Entrance Examination and the Free Place Regulations.  

Comprising some post-primary school principals, an inspector, professional and university interests and the Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, the Committee met with various parties and after consultation forwarded several recommendations aimed at improving the working effectiveness of the post-primary school and examination system.

Aware of the government’s concern over ‘civics’ education and noting in their report that the post-primary schools were “no longer selective” having to “cater for pupils of widely differing abilities and interests”, the Thomas Committee first suggested that a ‘common core curriculum’ be implemented in all post-primary institutions. Based upon the notion of a general education, one which was universally appropriate for all students, the core curriculum was to comprise English, social studies, science, mathematics, music, art/craft and physical education. Pointing to the obvious merits of a common core, the...
Committee claimed that such a course would enhance “the full development of the adolescent as a person… preparing …[post-primary pupils] …for an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, homemaker, and citizen”.\textsuperscript{189} Indeed, as the Committee understood it, this would act to cement the communal spirit of youth enabling “pupils to understand and live in accordance with the human values we sum up in the word democracy”.\textsuperscript{193} In view of the war-time crisis against fascism, such an educational philosophy as espoused as part of the social studies ‘core’ curriculum was extremely appealing since the aim was to:

assist in the development of individuals who are able to take their parts as effective citizens of a democracy… By an ‘effective citizen’ we mean one who has a lively sense of responsibility towards civilised values, who can make firm social judgements, and who acts intelligently and in the common interest.\textsuperscript{191}

In proposing the common core curriculum, the Thomas Committee also hoped to eliminate the traditional distinctions between secondary, district and technical schools. It was to be a most efficacious measure for while the credential race still was inextricably linked to education, the mandate that students must for a set number of hours learn ‘general subjects’ served (in theory) to place all pupils on a more equal footing in the examination competition.\textsuperscript{192} Notably, however, the desire to draw out and develop the abilities of all students along the lines of the ‘equality of opportunity’ ideal also highlighted another educational reality - that Committee members did not wish the core to be thought of as a uniform ‘course’ for all pupils.\textsuperscript{193} Anxious to ensure that bright students were “adequately extended”\textsuperscript{194}, and sensitive about being branded overly ‘intervening’, they encouraged teachers to regard the core requirements as being the “absolute minimum that they should

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., p. 5.


\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 9.
offer pupils, and...to decide ‘the scope, organisation, and content’ of the core within the context of the Committee’s recommendations”. Consequently, on the basis of eliminating wastage, the report stipulated that none of the “more detailed recommendations...[were]...intended to be binding on any school”. That said, the Committee praised the work already being done by the “best schools” which were leading the way in eliminating educational waste by adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of children. Obviously, the report sanctioned broad differentiation in common ‘core’ instruction and in this respect it read, “We have in mind no ‘levelling down’ process, but rather a state of affairs in which academic specialisation is a functional development from a broad and realistic course and not an impediment to balanced intellectual growth”. As it stood then the common core curriculum was not really common for all but rather a conservative reform which failed to make much impact on the education of those thought academically ‘able’ because the Thomas Committee “fully accepted ...[that in making the most out of some pupils abilities]...schools would provide for some differentiation in their approach”. As McKenzie observed, “The school ambitious were not threatened by the reforms which indeed now offered a further examination test for those chasing credentials”.

Notably too, the Thomas Committee’s advocacy of a common course of studies still embodied the traditional expectation that the work of females would primarily be based in the home. With the view that an “intelligent parent would wish a daughter to have...the knowledge, skill, and taste required to manage a home well and make it a pleasant place to

---


197 Ibid., p. 11.

198 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

199 Ibid., p. 9.


live”,\textsuperscript{202} the Committee envisaged girls being educated in “studies and activities directly related to the home”.\textsuperscript{203} As Openshaw et al. observed, “the Thomas Committee took for granted the sexual division of labour within the home and paid work in making homemaking skills compulsory for girls”.\textsuperscript{204} Jones et al. extended this analysis opining that openly differentiated curricula as conceived under the ‘common core’ was merely an effective way to improve the efficiency of girls schooling:

Although the Thomas Report of 1944 set new guidelines for the secondary school curriculum by introducing the concept of a common core curriculum, girls were still to receive additional tuition on domestic training. Although much was made of the element of choice within the new framework, the fact that girls were required to select mothercraft, housewifery, house planning, dress design, laundry work, cookery and meal planning meant that continued sexual differentiation was an explicit assumption of the report.\textsuperscript{205}

Thus, despite the fact that women were working outside of the home as a reserve army of labour during war-time,\textsuperscript{206} conventional expectations of appropriate gender roles still confined the focus of girls’ education to the domestic sphere. Indeed, as the Committee envisaged, girls were prepared for domesticity and motherhood and in this respect they

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{205} A. Jones et al., Myths and Realities: Schooling In New Zealand (Second Edition), Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{206} T. Brooking, et al., Milestones: Turning Points in New Zealand History, Lower Hutt: Mills Publications, 1988, pp. 175-175. As Brooking notes women were employed as a reserve army of labour outside the home during the Second World War. He writes: “The emergence of a home front meant that the lives of New Zealand women were affected much more directly by the Second World War than by the First. With 194,000 men serving in the armed forces, or two out of three of those eligible, many more employment opportunities were made available for women. Such traditional male preserves as bus and taxi driving, sawmilling and baking were taken up by women. The number women employed in industry rose from 21,000 to 38,000, including 2770 in the male-dominated metal and machine crafts. Over 2000 women worked in agriculture as land girls... The first women police constables were also appointed in 1941.” However Brooking also observed that “The impact of the Second World War upon women should not be exaggerated, however, because the majority returned to more traditional roles once the war was over.”
\end{footnotesize}
certainly were educated “to serve social ends and to lose themselves in social purposes greater than themselves.” 207

A ‘like’ philosophy on gender-appropriate education was also advanced with regard to the revision of the School Certificate Examination requirements. In the subject of science, for example, the Thomas Report recommended that “With girls, and to some extent with boys, too, many of the topics mentioned could be related to a study of the changing family and of the art of homemaking”. 208 Traditional expectations of appropriate gender roles were thus not confined only to the common core curriculum but also delivered through the requisite School Certificate provisions. Indeed, the Committee’s support for a general differentiated education was clearly stated in the report:

The wide range of differences does, however, call for further differentiation in the actual content of the curriculum. This we have recognised by leaving room in the ‘core’ studies for adaptation to meet individual needs, and by providing a very wide range of options for the School Certificate Examination… We think it will be found that the scheme proposed, whilst ensuring that the common needs of all future citizens are met, will allow ample scope for education in accordance with individual needs and aptitudes. To provide such scope, and to eliminate some of the human wastage that occurs through the failure of organised education to tap more than a fraction of the creative powers of youth, has been one of our main aims. A great modern psychologist has said: ‘Every normal man, woman, and child is a genius at something, as well as an idiot at something. It remains to discover what - at any rate in respect of the genius’. The process of discovering talent of all kinds and degrees, and providing it with the best possible conditions of development, should more and more become a central task of the school. 209

In point of fact, it was upon this basis that the recommendations pertaining to the revision of the School Certificate syllabus were made by the Thomas Committee. Surrounded by a multitude of intricacies, the different abilities, skills, aptitudes and interests of all post-primary students were to be accommodated by the revised School Certificate Examination wherein a student had to pass in English and three other subjects chosen from


208 Ibid., p. 32.

a wider range of options than had been earlier laid down in 1934.\textsuperscript{210} With the “ordinary” post-primary pupil in mind, the Committee had fashioned 32 options (ranging from agricultural, commercial and home-science courses) in an effort to appeal to and develop the talents of the “educated layman” rather than that of the university graduate.\textsuperscript{211} The introduction of accrediting for University Entrance in 1944 added weight to this policy as it meant that the revised School Certificate was now (as originally intended) bound to cater for the majority of students who would not proceed to the University.\textsuperscript{212} On this score the report read:

Now that accrediting is come into effect, the University Entrance Examination will be taken only by those who, for one reason or another, cannot be accredited; and it will be what its name implies - a test for the specific purpose of determining fitness for University studies. Hence the way now appears to be open for the School Certificate to take the place intended for it.\textsuperscript{213}

Significantly, the status of the School Certificate Examination was to be bolstered in the minds of pupils because a pass was to be structured so as to demand both the “powers of application...[and]...an adequate level of general intelligence”\textsuperscript{214} Essentially this meant that without a general level of ‘intelligence’ not even those who applied themselves would be able to pass the examination. Founded upon the meritocratic ideal, the School Certificate Examination was not to be regarded as an ‘easy course and an easy pass’ but rather candidates had to satisfy both a “good standard of attainment”\textsuperscript{215} in the examination as well as “satisfactory achievement in the ‘core’ studies”\textsuperscript{216} before s/he could obtain a pass. Under

\textsuperscript{210} D. McKenzie et al., \textit{Scholars or Dollars? Selected Historical Case Studies of Opportunity Costs in New Zealand Education}, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996, p. 176. “To pass the examination, candidates had to obtain an aggregate of 200 marks in four subjects (one of which had to be English) and a minimum of 30 per cent in each subject.


\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Ibid.}
such a scheme it was accepted that School Certificate could be used as a ‘terminal’ qualification for those leaving school as well as a preparatory one:

the courses leading up to the School Certificate should, we think, be rounded-off - not, of course, in the sense that the pupil should be able to regard his education as finished, but in the sense that they should not be merely preparatory to later schooling...there are subjects that are rarely very rewarding without long study and that, presumably, will not often be taken by pupils who do not intend to carry them beyond the School Certificate stage... pupils definitely intended to proceed to the University will concentrate on their chosen subjects in their post-certificate year or years, and they can, if necessary, be then given a systematic course specially directed towards University requirements. Such pupils will normally be of good academic ability and have a strong motive for learning, and their previous work should have laid a foundation in experience for a logical and systematic study of their subjects. 217

To further popularise and endorse the scheme it was envisaged that most pupils would sit the School Certificate Examination at the end of their fourth year of post-primary education (Form Six) with only a talented minority entering after three years of study. 218 Such a stipulation indicated that the examination was designed to avoid academic waste, to cater for all types of post-primary pupils at the same time as not limiting the scope of ‘able’ students who could readily pass the examination at an earlier time without stress or “strain”. 219

Equality of educational opportunity, wherein provisions were made to cater for and nurture every pupil’s interests, abilities, temperament, vocational inclinations and environmental circumstances, appeared to be satisfied with the institution of a common core curriculum and the revised School Certificate Examination. 220 Combined with the raising of

217 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
218 Ibid., p. 13.
219 Ibid.
the school leaving age to fifteen in 1944, the provision of an equal access policy was presumed to have really come into affect in that every pupil had to stay at school and receive instruction in the common core. As Lee observed, Mason’s war time concerns for youth which had prompted the establishment of the Thomas Committee were virtually allayed by raising the school leaving age because every pupil was enabled “to be drawn into the high schools...to receive...citizenship training”. McKenzie et al. added to this analysis by highlighting the startling impact of these reforms: “The result of these regulations was an immediate and substantial increase in post-primary school enrolments, a trend which was to be felt increasingly in the senior classes of the post-primary schools within the next decade”. Accordingly, the recommendations contained in the Thomas Report were greeted with much enthusiasm by the government because the policy of bestowing upon all pupils a level playing field in the educational arena was regarded by their egalitarian culture as fair and just. Indeed, the equality of educational opportunity ideal appeared to have been fully realised by the 1945 Education (Post-Primary Instruction) Regulations which sanctioned the implementation on 1 February 1946 of the Thomas Committee’s reforms.

Notwithstanding the optimistic sentiments of government, the recommendations of the Thomas Committee were greeted with considerable disdain from some critics in the education sector. Professor Anderson, a philosopher at Auckland university, dubbed the proposals of the Thomas Committee as ‘The Flight from Reason’ and in an article under...

221 W.B. Sutch. Poverty and Progress in New Zealand: A Re-Assessment, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1969, p. 287. R. Openshaw, Unresolved Struggle: Consensus and Conflict in New Zealand State Post-Primary Education, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995, pp. 51-54. Openshaw noted however that the war crisis may have been one of the motivating factors for raising the age of compulsion in education. Citing Greg Lee. Openshaw observed that “the raising of the school leaving age to 15 was as much socially motivated as it was educationally inspired”. Indeed, the sentiments of Mason in the House in 1943 with regard to raising the school leaving age reflected as much: “Owing to war conditions there are an increasing number of young adolescents who are missing the discipline of a normal home, and it is essential that the school keep its grip upon them during these very critical years, even if it could not give them quite the facilities one would wish for.”


that name attacked the report for its anti-intellectual and seemingly anti-Catholic stance. As Renwick noted, although clearly in the minority, Anderson took issue with the report believing that it represented the epitome of imperious attitudes by promoting “the totalitarian school in the totalitarian state”. As Lee observed, critics like Anderson opposed the Thomas Committee’s recommendations on the basis that Catholic interests were not represented on the Committee and because it was seen to favour the ‘average’ student over the academically able one.

However, as history was to show, such criticism of the report’s anti-intellectual stance was, for several reasons, to prove unwarranted. The difficulty in obtaining copies of the Thomas Report meant that many teachers continued to instruct along academically-oriented lines. Openshaw acknowledged this point and, citing Murdoch’s analysis, wrote that “subject-change alone would not bring about a revolution in post-primary education…. [Murdoch] …noted that many schools lacked adequate facilities while teaching methods largely remained examination-orientated”. Codd added to this analysis suggesting that most teachers failed to meet the full challenges of the Thomas Report, not because they were unsympathetic towards its aims, but because in general they did not have a firm foundation of educational theory from which to derive their own practical judgements. They were, in the main, subject specialists struggling to cope with the demands of an increasingly large and diverse population of adolescents within schools which were structurally little different from the selective, rigid, bureaucratically organized bastions of authority inherited from the past.

Moreover, with greater numbers of students retained at the post-primary level, ‘credential inflation’, as experienced with the Matriculation Examination, soon became a

226 Ibid., p. 128.
marked phenomenon. Because *more students* sought to enter the School Certificate Examination after only *three years* of schooling, the “minimum permissible time of three years for the ‘able minority’ rather than the intended four years, three years quickly became the norm”\(^1\). In time this trend reduced the marketable ‘worth’ of the School Certificate Examination. As Openshaw et.al. noted,

> [t]he nation’s post-primary schools were all experiencing massive increases in entry enrolments but, even more importantly, for the first time in their history, increases were also occurring in the senior classes... Now the post-primary schools had to cope with entry and retention increases, both of which subsequently threatened the ‘scarcity value’ of the School Certificate Examination.\(^2\)

Certainly, the impact of the Thomas Committee on post-primary education was less efficacious than originally intended. However, with the publication of the Thomas Report in 1944, the notion of a common core curriculum and the revision of the School Certificate Examination were considered by most in the education sector as a ‘progressive’ and efficient educational measure. Implying as they did fair treatment for all through an equal access policy, the Report’s recommendations were touted as nothing short of ‘liberal’ and in line with the 1939 credo which had been launched by Fraser, the public appeared to respond to the changes enthusiastically.\(^2\) The public’s motivation, was, of course, driven by their thirst for credentials. Although the Thomas Committee did “seriously underestimated the premium which the public and schools placed upon nationalexamination competitions”,\(^2\) its intentions were clearly efficiency-oriented. By way of the common core and the new School Certificate Examination, schools were deemed capable of eliminating educational waste by catering for and nurturing every student’s abilities and aptitudes. By making the most out of every pupil’s talents schools were expected to develop and produce pupils who were highly trained in a diverse range of areas. National economic and social benefits were implied by such a plan. Indeed the Thomas Report had envisaged that:

---


all post-primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying occupational ambitions, receive a generous and well-balanced education. Such an education would aim, firstly, at the full development of the adolescent as a person; and secondly, at preparing him for an active place in our New Zealand society as worker, neighbour, homemaker and citizen...[the aim of education is]...to create people who are not only self-disciplined and free in spirit, gifted in work and in enjoyment, worthy and desirable as persons, but also responsible and generous in social life, able to give and take freely from others, willing to serve social ends.\(^\text{234}\)

Certainly such a scheme could have been equally as well captured by an educational efficiency-treatise:

Educate the individual according to his capabilities. This requires that the materials of the curriculum be sufficiently various to meet the needs of every class of individuals in the community; and that the course of training and study be sufficiently flexible that the individual can be given just the things that he needs...People, after all, should not be taught what they will never use. That...[is]...a waste,\(^\text{235}\)

or, in the words of Frederick Winslow Taylor,

all great things will be done by that type of cooperation in which each man performs the function for which he is best suited, each man preserves his own individuality and is supreme in his particular function, and each man at the same time loses none of his originality and proper personal initiative, and yet is controlled by and must work harmoniously with many other men.\(^\text{236}\)

To recapitulate then, this chapter has provided an overview of several educational changes during the period 1930-1945 to illustrate the point that the expansion of schooling was undertaken to bolster educational efficiency and equality of opportunity in the post-primary school arena. Influenced greatly by the depression and war crises, much of the reform aimed at improving schooling in New Zealand was popular with the public. The implementation of 'social promotion' policies, the abolition of Proficiency; heightened attention to effective teacher training methods; the introduction of accrediting the


University Entrance; the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen; the institution of a common core curriculum; and the re-casting of the School Certificate Examination exemplify this point.

Notably, however, and against a tide of growing social expectation reflected by enhanced welfare policies and social introspection seen at the (1937) New Education Fellowship, efforts to restrict the educational opportunities of youth on the assumed basis of educational efficiency were firmly rejected by egalitarian public sentiment. Consolidation of schools, the promotion of agricultural education policies (in particular in the district high schools), the raising of examination standards (Proficiency), the introduction of two year (rather than three year) Intermediate schools, and the institution of a new test (School Certificate Examination) geared for the less able student proved ineffectual in the mind-sets of many students. Such schemes were seen merely as limiting life chances by discouraging pupils from attaining valuable academic credentials. Beeby aptly summed up this position when he noted that the ‘equality of opportunity’ ideal had to encompass a wide range of interpretations\(^237\) - so wide in fact that it had to imply that equality of access would indeed yield equality of results across class, gender and ethnic boundaries. Such a philosophy was encapsulated by the 1939 Beeby-Fraser dictum wherein the myth of ‘equality of educational opportunity’ legitimated curriculum differentiation on a palpable basis, making it easy for the public to accept differences in the efficiency of schooling on the basis of fairness and justice. Whether the public reacted to the reform in the way intended by the 1939 architects was really a side issue. The important factor to note was that the public did believe in and support the validity of the educational equality myth and they did so despite the reality that it was simply another efficiency-driven measure.

Chapter Five will draw upon the educational reforms covered in this thesis spanning the years 1900-1945 to illustrate the case that equality and efficiency policies were virtually synonymous. Such an analysis will also show that following the release of the Thomas Committee’s report, the academically ‘able’ were rarely affected by policies designed to eliminate educational ‘waste’. As asserted in Chapter One, the myth of equality of educational opportunity legitimated educational expansion and, in doing so, hid efficiency doctrines squarely behind the socially acceptable ideals of fair-play and justice. Chapter Five

will reveal that the reform of New Zealand’s apparently egalitarian education system had much in common with Frederick Winslow Taylor’s efficiency schema in that both were strongly endorsed by the public in their quest for a ‘better’ life.
CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

THE IMPACT OF EQUALITY AND EFFICIENCY ON THE NEW
ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL SCENE.

In conclusion, educational expansion along the lines of ‘equality of educational opportunity’ was in fact motivated by the quest for greater efficiency in New Zealand schooling. This was exemplified first by the institution of the 1877 Education Act. The mandate that all students were to be subject to free, compulsory and secular elementary schooling was legitimated on the basis of ‘equality’ and justice as educating pupils in elementary subjects reflected the government’s wish to promote communal harmony and well-being amongst all of its citizens. However the fact that this provision was not to be applied to the post-primary arena mirrored the greater desire to prevent ‘wastage’ in the education sector. Ordinary children, it was assumed, would never find secondary schooling useful and as such, their educational experience should be confined to the elementary schools in order that they might join the ranks of ‘honest labour’ upon completion of their primary school course.

Implying as it did educational differentiation, such a scheme was indeed akin to that proposed by Taylor in his efficiency treatise on labour. The experiences of ordinary New Zealand students could well have been equated to that of Schmidt, Taylor’s first-class ‘pig-iron’ man. Like Schmidt, ‘dull’ students were to be kept out of work which required real academic talent. Such elimination was in fact provided by way of the 1903 Secondary Schools Act where the Proficiency test was supposedly to reveal and then cater for those ‘able’ enough to benefit from academic-typed studies by allowing them free entry to the academic halls of learning. In this instance, the meritocratic extension of educational opportunities occurred under the umbrella of ‘equality’ and it appealed to the egalitarian public culture because talented poor students, from rural and urban areas, were now to be entitled to higher schooling as a ‘right’ rather than a privilege. In the face of an expanding

---


school retention rate, and with growing concern for the well-being of youth commonly expressed by the middle-classes, such a proposal was readily accepted by the community. Indeed, like Schmidt, the New Zealand public eagerly gave credence to a policy designed to maximise efficiency by making ('able') pupils proficient in work they were best suited to.

The introduction of the Competency Examination in 1904 also signalled the government’s intention to maximise efficiency in the educational arena. Now technical students were to be subject to a form of ‘equality of opportunity’ as they too were to have their talents recognised and catered for by way of a two year free technical schooling policy. Coupled with the earlier introduction of the Manual and Technical Instruction Act (1900 and 1902), this policy was supposed to heighten the status of those subjects not traditionally regarded as academic. The provision of free-places at technical schools mirrored concerns over the production of competent workers in an ever-growing technological society. Economic and social benefits were implied by such policies as educating pupils along technical lines was seen to contribute to steady and sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, social harmony would also be attained by recognising (the talents of) and catering for technical school pupils. It was, according to administrators like Hogben, a most efficacious scheme because in accepting one’s role as a technical worker, social and educational progress would necessarily follow. Like Schmidt, technical students were thus expected to know their place in the educative process with the result that efficiency outputs would be maximised through the elimination of educational ‘waste’.

However, the experiences of students at the technical and district high schools reinforced another reality - that, unlike Taylor’s efficiency treatise, the interests of the pupils and the government were not identical but mutually exclusive. Students attending district high schools were reluctant to take rural-based studies and like their technical school

---


8 Ibid., p. 10.
counterparts, they demanded access to valuable academic studies. For these students such work yielded better economic and social rewards in terms of status, pay, and the chance to become geographically and socially mobile. Monetary incentives to promote science and manual instruction in the expanding technical school sector did nothing to dissuade many technical students from striving to gain academic credentials. For their part, some girls were loath to accept domestic-oriented education and, in the face of social pressure for educative equality for the ‘able’, Hogben could not prevent girls from pursuing academically-based instruction. Essentially then, the government’s attempt to streamline education along the lines of greater efficiency by reducing subject overlap in the three types of post-primary institutions and tailoring appropriate education courses (for example, in the case of girls) remained a dead letter in the face of an ever-growing, credential driven school market.

The raising of the standards of Proficiency in 1905 and thereafter further illustrated the government’s attempt to eliminate educational ‘waste’. Too many ‘unfit’ students, it was claimed, were taking academic courses and utilising this experience as a credential by which to enter the work force. However, the demand for equality of educational access to academic studies meant that consumers zealously resisted efforts to allocate pupils in accordance with their future life roles because academic education was seen as their ticket to a better life such that it had became a much coveted form of schooling. Even attempts to de-emphasise examinations, for example, by reducing testing in the primary schools, could not abate this trend. With the goal of winning of Proficiency uppermost in the minds of many Standard Six pupils, and a huge growth in retention rates at the upper levels of the primary sector, non-academic post-primary school courses were avoided by ambitious youth. Pupils failed to cooperate with the government scheme and unlike Taylor’s workers

---


10 A.E. Campbell, Educating New Zealand, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p. 119.


forged no intimate affiliation with a process designed to exclude some of them from their chance at a better life.\textsuperscript{14}

Even by 1910, the 'best' education was not, in the public mind, equated with the future life needs of pupils but their want of academic credentials. The proposals voiced at the 1910 Education Conference to enhance the status of agriculture and technical work by providing more scholarships were regarded by many parents as not being in the best interests of their children.\textsuperscript{15} Despite the fact that such industries (particularly, agricultural ones) were vital to national growth, pupils still remained convinced that their own prosperity and well-being lay with academic studies and the chance of gaining valuable academically-based credentials. Accordingly, even though such plans were sold to the public on the basis of providing fairness and justice to all - in other words, equality of educational opportunity - through the recognition of diverse types of talents in education, many pupils were not enticed into the government web of 'waste elimination'.\textsuperscript{16} Certainly, ambitious students appeared to be cut from the same cloth as those who had cried out for access to academic studies before the introduction of free places in 1903.

In this respect, the 1912 Cohen Commission also failed to promote agricultural education. To secure the efficient working of the school system, the delegates had proposed that more emphasis be placed upon such studies.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, in line with Taylor's efficiency treatise, the commissioners wanted to attain the services of 'expert' teachers to instruct in agricultural subjects. Placing schooling in the hands of experts was expected to enhance the effectiveness as well as the popularity of agricultural schooling.\textsuperscript{18} However, the Commissioners underestimated the hegemony of academic schooling and in doing so, over-estimated the impact of their proposed reforms. Indeed, tailoring schooling to bear on the future life of the non-academic pupil was an ideal which was far-removed from the aspirations of many students. In point of fact, however, consolidating rural schools did


\textsuperscript{15} \textit{AJHR}, 1910, Vol. II, E-10, pp. 18, 46.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{AJHR}, 1912, Vol. III, E-12, pp. 15-16.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 13, 480-481.
actually eliminate financial waste and educating girls along domestic-typed lines served to promote the work done in the feminine arena.  

By 1915, the war crisis prompted a reappraisal of the efficacy of the school system. Realisation of New Zealand's geographic isolation fashioned a sense of nationalism such that education was viewed as the route to social and economic salvation. The tide was turning and once again New Zealand's education system was influenced by a wave of reforms aimed at promoting social and educational efficiency through an extension of educational opportunities. Hanan's Memorandum, of 1916, which focused upon ways to enhance the educational equality of vocational studies, symbolised this activity. Like Hogben, Hanan concluded that educating the majority of students along academic lines was wasteful. His educational ideology was akin to Taylor's efficiency treatise in that like Schmidt, non-academic students were assumed to derive no benefit from highly intellectual-based work. But Hanan's Memorandum departed from Taylor's scheme in one important respect in that Hanan believed that equality would be realised when academic students entered traditionally non-academic based courses, studying in agricultural and technical fields. Nevertheless, despite his best intentions, students continued to strive for academic credentials. Even the implementation in 1917 of Free Place Regulations - which attempted to elevate the status of non-academic courses - coercing third and fourth form boys into agricultural and dairying courses and girls into home-science classes was resented by many ambitious students. Hanan's logic failed to prevail in these instances and except for the introduction of free dental treatment, open-air schools and the revision of staffing scales, pupil ratios and teacher pay-rates, the extension of education along the lines of equality of opportunity was viewed by many through an academic periscope - the importance of

19 Ibid., pp. 20-22.
credentials for terminal purposes meant that Hanan's interpretation of educational equality was vastly different from the public whose egalitarianism rejected any attempt to limit the hard-working student.

The introduction of intelligence testing proved a most persuasive handmaiden for the promotion of differentiated education through the elimination of educational 'waste'. Adopted from the United States of America, intelligence tests were utilised as instruments of equality by offering a way to assess students abilities supposedly impartially and without favouritism. Based upon scientific theory intelligence testing was akin to Taylor's efficiency schema, it was assumed that intelligence tests could allocate people neutrally into courses best suited to their abilities and aptitudes. Coupled with appropriate educational guidance, such a scheme was widely regarded by those in the education administration as a significant step towards the provision of genuine equality of educational opportunity. Given that the egalitarian public would not accept the “imposition of an openly selective school system”, intelligence tests were an effective, meritocratic way to legitimate differentiation in schooling as they purported to do so without bias or favour. Indeed, intelligence testing provided an ideal way to select pupils for agricultural and technical courses at a time when concerns were being raised over the dearth of experienced agricultural and technical people in the work-force and when too many students were seen to be wasting time in academic courses and costing the government money in useless training.

The adoption of the United States of America Junior High School system was another means by which the government hoped to eliminate educational waste during this period. Designed to cater to the abilities, aptitudes and talents of all pupils, Junior High


Schools were introduced primarily to meet the needs of students unsuited to an academic education. By making the most out of every pupil’s abilities, this system was seen to be equality oriented because all students were to be subjected to specialised instruction specifically tailored to their own aptitudes and talents. Such a system was thought to be socially cohesive as every pupil attending a Junior High School was supposed to fairly be served in terms of educational instruction.³¹ In an era characterised by anxieties over the maintenance of national stability (hence the passage of the Child Welfare Act 1925³²) and with youth flooding into the cities in search of employment opportunities, the Junior High School programme was expected to alleviate some of the problems caused by youth alienated by an academic education which allegedly had failed to meet their needs. It was a plan which was efficiency at its finest because Junior High Schools sought to fairly eliminate waste in schooling at the same time as satisfying the educational needs of a diverse and egalitarian-based student population.³³

Despite these innovations, by 1925 too many students were still seen to be demanding and receiving academic instruction. Indeed, to encourage social harmony the notion of a common curriculum had been broached with regard to junior high schools and academic post-primary institutions.³⁴ Notwithstanding this proposal, the financial constraints of the day meant that educational administrators rejected this suggestion because they regarded the most efficacious course of waste elimination as one which promoted educational specialisation.³⁵ The debate over such a scheme subsided for the time being and attention in the educational arena turned to the recommendations of the newly released Report of Frank Tate and Harry Reichel.

Primarily the Reichel-Tate Report of 1925 focused upon ways to counteract the domination of academic studies and to make schooling for the majority of ordinary post-primary school pupils more educationally relevant and effective. Like Hogben and Hanan, Reichel and Tate alleged that too much attention was given by too many students to traditional academically-based work. Ordinary pupils, they claimed, needed to apply their talents to agricultural and technical courses and by doing this economic growth would be promoted because in a country the size of New Zealand, academic knowledge was of only so much worth to national prosperity. Consonant with the recommendations of the 1912 Cohen Commission, the Reichel-Tate Report also proposed that agricultural 'experts' be employed in district high schools and that girls be schooled efficiently in domestic-styled work. Further, the report suggested that more money be spent on promoting equality of opportunity in the agricultural and technical sectors and endorsed the development of a more effective method of agricultural training (especially at the University level) and the better financing of technical schooling too. However, despite the report's attempt to succour national advance through educational expansion, many 'ordinary' pupils remained content to study along academic lines; they refused to be part of the plan to eliminate educational waste, and in doing so, promote economic growth as they wanted to enter for the Matriculation Examination, a test which had become a recognisable goal for many students in the post-primary schooling arena. Concentrating their efforts in this direction maximised the interests of those individuals who knew that Matriculation had been positioned as the minimum credential by which to enter the public service.

Economic constraints, however, meant that many of Reichel and Tate's proposals could not be implemented by the government. Yet, attention to the deficiencies of the education sector were not deflected by this economic reality but redirected in the form of a debate over the merit of endorsing specialist education over and above a common one.

---

36 AJHR, 1925, Vol. II, E-7a, pp. 23, 42-43. (Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand, the Reichel-Tate Report)

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., pp. 6, 31, 41.


Many Opposition politicians such as Fraser and Holland, questioned the wisdom of drafting and developing students at too early a stage along specialist lines in terms of the rights of such pupils as ‘first class’ citizens.\textsuperscript{41} Such a debate was evident also in the work of the 1926-1928 Syllabus Revision (Lawson) Committee wherein a Majority and Minority Report was issued, each varying significantly in their suggestions about how best to eliminate waste and to provide real equality of educational opportunity. Substantial differences in the two reports were reflected by their particular ideas on the value of exploratory courses (as opposed to specialist ones), the benefits of social promotion, the scope of girls education, the raising of the school leaving age, the establishment of more Junior High Schools, and the economics of consolidation, in terms of reducing wasteful overlap in schools.\textsuperscript{42} When placed against the broad objective of making schooling more efficient, the extension of educational opportunities along equality lines was certainly not without controversy.

Moving further into depressed economic times deflected attention from the divided proposals of the 1926-1928 Syllabus Revision Committee. Even re-casting the primary school syllabus in 1929 to maximise efficiency - giving all children scope to develop talents along the lines of the whole child ideal\textsuperscript{43} - failed to detract from the overriding goal of attaining Proficiency in Standard Six. In harsh economic times, pupils unable to find jobs still coveted this award because it was the means to a better life and some measure of job security.\textsuperscript{44}

Such was the impact of the depression that it forged a sense of social introspection with regard to the well-being and the education of youth. In an effort to eliminate waste in harsh economic times, the government slashed educational expenditure and excluded five year olds from schooling; raised the minimum standard for a Proficiency pass; closed


\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools} (1929 Red Book), Wellington: Education Department, 1930, pp. 5, 64-66.

teachers’ colleges; and cut teachers’ salaries. Even as early as 1930 some of the Atmore Reports’ recommendations to socially promote less able children to the educational level of their peers, to develop the best system of teacher training and acquire the best teachers for the job, as well as raise the school leaving age to fifteen, provide more university scholarships and reduce class sizes at the university level were regarded as being too financially radical to implement. In difficult economic circumstances, only the proposals to consolidate and unify education systems and to bolster the status of agricultural and technical education met with a measure of favour - although none could be implemented at this time.

In the quest to further eliminate wasteful expenditure, the 1932 Regulations for Intermediate Schools reduced the length of this school course to two years in the belief that two years was ample time in which to discover and develop the talents of young students. This policy, coupled with the announcement that Standard Four children of moderate ability be schooled to enter ordinary employment roles, was not forgotten by an egalitarian public anxious to cater for, develop and reward all children’s efforts.

Education still was seen as the ticket to a better life, providing chances to become geographically and socially mobile. Such regard for education was reflected by the failure of the newly introduced School Certificate Examination - a test very different from Matriculation and designed to cater for the less academic child at the post-primary level. Developed under the guise of equality, the apparently insidious purpose of this examination

---


did not disguise the view that it was (when compared to Matriculation) a second-rate test. Consequently, the public’s pursuit of valuable credentials meant that their response to the School Certificate Examination was, at best, lukewarm. Their desire to receive the best type of education was significantly at odds with the State and actively thwarted government efforts to eliminate waste in schooling.\textsuperscript{52}

In better financial times, and with the Labour Party in office, schooling underwent a huge series of changes. Under a welfaristic banner and through the promotion of extended social policies such as the 1936 \textit{Fair Rents Act} and the 1938 \textit{Social Security Act}, the expectations of citizens that the State would as a neutral benefactor provide real social and educational equality rose dramatically.\textsuperscript{53} This was exemplified by the debate in the House over the 1935 Director of Educations Report wherein ideas to enhance real equality in schooling through the promotion of more effective policies which focused on the needs of the ‘average’ as well as the extraordinary pupil were debated vigorously in the House.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1937, the abolition of Proficiency signalled the end to the dominant influence of this examination upon the primary and intermediate school curricula. Effective elementary education was now to enhance children’s growth, irrespective of their abilities, and schooling along ‘child-centred’ lines was officially regarded as a right of all young New Zealand citizens.\textsuperscript{55}

The New Education Fellowship Conference of 1937 also endorsed such a view and popularised the movement towards real equality in schooling throughout the nation such that by 1939 every pupil, irrespective of their socio-economic background, was guaranteed equality of opportunity and directed into post-primary courses best suited to their own educational needs, capacities, talents and aptitudes. This policy aimed to maximise the working efficiency of the school system to the extent that every student’s talents were to be nurtured for their personal development and for the greater good of the nation. At a time


\textsuperscript{54} NZPD. 1936. Vol. 245, pp. 513-530.

when the world was engaged in war, this directive appealed to nationalistic sentiments held within a general egalitarian culture.  

The Thomas Committee’s recommendations concerning a common core curriculum, the revision of the School Certificate Examination and the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen pointedly marked a new era in educational expansion along equality of opportunity lines. The recommendations, which were to be implemented in 1945, stood as living testimony to changing social and educational ideals and as such, were eagerly supported by the public who were well aware that such reforms were also geared towards the elimination of educational waste with girls being educated along domestic lines.

Furthermore, and perhaps of greater significance, ‘able’ students were less affected by government attempts to eliminate wastage. Under a meritocratic banner the more ambitious post-primary students were virtually unaffected by the raising of Proficiency standards, the introduction of Junior High Schools, intelligence testing practices, School Certificate, or by the attempts to popularise, label and guide pupils into non-academic courses in technical or agricultural education sectors. Indeed, it seems that equality of educational opportunity came to be synonymous with the pursuit of efficiency in New Zealand schooling. Schmidt’s experience, under Taylor’s efficiency regime, was indeed analogous to that of ‘ordinary’ New Zealand school pupils under the government’s equality-oriented directives. Applying Taylor’s efficiency schema to the expansion of New Zealand education under the umbrella of the ‘myth’ of equality of educational opportunity, it becomes apparent that:


Other things being equal, and under broad conditions, educational growth as such has the effect of increasing rather than decreasing social and economic inequality, even in the case of an educational system that becomes more equalitarian.\textsuperscript{60}

Yet, as Bedggood has implied with regard to the social system, egalitarian sentiment and faith in the meritocratic ideal frequently served to rationalise the opportunities provided to pupils and thus legitimate their socio-economic position in society.\textsuperscript{61} It endorsed the hidden reality that:

The school apart from life, apart from politics, is a lie, a hypocrisy. Bourgeois society indulged in this lie, covering up the fact that it was using the schools as a means of domination by declaring that the school was politically neutral and in the service of all.\textsuperscript{62}

With the vision that those with ‘effort and ability’ could achieve high academic attainment, the position of academically ‘able’ students in this so-called ‘progressive’ era still remained a legitimate one. Such students forged ahead under the common core curriculum and, relative to their practically-minded counterparts, continued to gain valuable examination credentials and a ticket for geographic and social mobility. Indeed, the myth of equality of educational opportunity had captured the egalitarian spirit of the New Zealand public and in doing so had furthered the quest for educational efficiency. It had effectively endorsed different types of education for different kinds of children at the same time as professing fairness for all in a small democracy.\textsuperscript{63} However, as time was to prove, equality of educational opportunity was little but an inglorious ideal. The educational achievements of those from working class backgrounds, Maori and women, relative to upper-class Pakeha males, revealed that schooling did not equalise opportunities but in fact reproduced inequalities. Thus, while efficient schooling in the New Zealand context was designed to serve all children, as history was to show, not all children were treated equally.\textsuperscript{64}


**Bibliography**

**Primary Sources**


Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand (AJHR) 1916, Vol. II, Session II, Wellington, E-1a, pp. 1-11, (Memorandum by the Minister of Education dealing with some Phases of Educational Progress and reviewing Existing Conditions in the Light of National Requirements - ‘Educational Progress’ 1916 New Zealand - Hanan’s Memorandum).


Education Department, Conference on Post-Primary Education, Wellington: Education Department, 1922 (Chair: John Caughley).


Special Report on Educational Subjects No 16 Investigation into certain aspects of post-primary education in New Zealand, by Frank Tate, Director of Education, Victoria, Australia, W.A.G. Skinner, Government Printer, Wellington, 1925.

Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools (1929 Red Book), Wellington: Education Department, 1930.

The Dominion, November 2, 1925, Vol 7, No 75, pp. 357-360.

Secondary Sources


Faulds, G., “Mental Testing and Social Selection: a case study of the use of intelligence and attainment tests to select children for streamed classes at Kowhai Junior High School 1922-


Hawke, G.R., Depression And Recovery In New Zealand, VUW Working Paper in Economic History 85/2, No place of publishing, (June, 1985).


Newman, S.F., (ed.), Read All About It: New Zealand In the 1920s. Extracts from newspapers of the time, Wellington: Hicks, Smith and Sons, 1969.


Rosenberg, W., What Every New Zealander should know about the Coming Depression and how to overcome it, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1978.


Taylor, F.W., Scientific Management (with a foreword by Harlow S. Person), New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947.


