

9. Then you do not think that attendance at school should be confined to a particular age?—Not if the school is so organized as to provide the proper methods of instruction.

10. Do you think the schools in this colony are so organized?—In the larger towns we have large schools which have large so-called infant classes, in which the proper methods of instruction and discipline are observed.

11. We have heard a good deal of the kindergarten system: would it not be easier to provide instruction for infant classes under that system, better for the child and less costly to the State?—So far as my knowledge of the subject goes, I may state that the kindergarten system, in its full development, requires so large a staff of trained teachers, and is therefore so costly, as to be adapted only to what might be called middle-class instruction. The principles, however, that underlie the kindergarten method are the true principles of all infant instruction—I think I may say the true principles of all instruction—and in all well-organized infant schools the most important principles of the kindergarten system are recognised and acted upon. I know of the existence of some so-called kindergarten schools in New Zealand, but I believe they are by no means fully developed under the kindergarten system. They are practically infant schools with teachers who have some knowledge of kindergarten practice. With regard to the expense of infant schools in which there is an infusion of the kindergarten element without the full development of the kindergarten methods and practice, they are not very expensive schools to maintain. As a matter of fact, the Boards obtain a large proportion of the means to maintain the costly district schools in outlying places by the savings they are able to effect in the management of their large infant schools, upon which they expend, it may be, 25s. a head per annum, receiving from the State the full capitation. I think the saving referred to in the question is being practically made all over the country.

12. I asked you, Mr. Habens, whether, in your opinion, there would be any saving in adopting the kindergarten method for infant classes. I take it for granted that you have seen it stated that there is a kindergarten school in Tinakori Road, which is doing good work, and it is said to be carried on at a very small cost?—My answer is that it is probably not a fully-developed kindergarten school. I have no doubt it is an infant school, with a large infusion of the kindergarten principle adopted by the teachers, but not in the strict sense a fully-developed kindergarten school. My opinion is based on what I know of the expense of a thorough kindergarten school.

13. You say that the cost of the young children is about 25s.?—Yes, I put it roughly at 25s. I will not pledge myself to the figure, but I may find an illustration of it in looking through the report, if you will allow me to do so. I would refer you to page 26 of the Appendix of the last Education Report, where it will be seen that the Mount Cook Infant School in Wellington had an average attendance of 358 children, and the salaries of teachers amounted to £760. I would refer you also to page 22 of the same Appendix, where it is stated that in the Wanganui Infant School, with an average attendance of 278 children, the teachers' salaries amounted to £390. I may state that many of the larger infant schools are included in the general statistics of the main schools to which they belong, so that this Appendix does not show the specific cost of their infant departments.

14. *Mr. Ormond.*] Is that generally so, or is it the exception that the infant schools are included in the large schools?—I see that I can find one or two rare instances where the cost of the infant department is given separately; but it is generally and almost as a rule included in the total for the school.

15. *The Chairman.*] I have been told that the cost of the school referred to in the Tinakori Road is much less. I understand that the fee charged for very young children is 3d., and 6d. a week for others; that would come to very much less than 25s. Do you know anything as to the fees charged in that school?—My wife lately sent a child to the Tinakori Road Kindergarten School—a child between three and four years of age. I understood that the payment was 6d. a week. But I should observe that school does not come in any way within the scope of my official knowledge I therefore cannot answer the question positively.

16. Do you think it is as good as your infant schools?—I could not say anything as to that without seeing the school.

17. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Am I right in taking it that, in the matter of excluding children under six years, teachers and parents would have a common interest; that capitation would be paid on children over six, and no capitation under six?—I think that the interest of parents and teachers in that matter would be common.

18. As to the effect of teaching upon children of tender years, is there any undue mental strain involved?—In a properly-organized school I think the exercise is pleasant and healthful, and does not involve any mental strain.

19. *Mr. Ormond.*] Have you expressed any opinion as to the results in regard to expenditure between five years and six years?—I think the results are well worth the money the Boards pay for the so-called infant classes.

20. Do you agree that there is great diversity of opinion among specialists on this point?—I am aware there is much diversity of opinion upon the matter, but I think that diversity of opinion is partly due to the fact that many who condemn the early attendance of children at school are not sufficiently informed as to the methods of discipline and instruction adopted in schools which are specially adapted to children under seven years of age. Objection on the ground of mental strain could scarcely be advanced by any one who knew how light and gentle the discipline is, and how pleasant the method of imparting instruction.

21. Would you confine your opinion to the expression of a judgment that discipline only would be the result as regards children between five and six years of age?—I have included discipline and instruction, regarding both as of very high value, the instruction being very important as affording a basis for the further instruction that will be given in the more advanced part of their educational course.