

SECTION 1.—PRIMARY EDUCATION.

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| (1.) Kindergarten and varied occupations. | (4.) Elementary science. |
| (2.) Drawing. | (5.) Manual instruction. |
| (3.) Brush-work. | (6.) Domestic instruction. |

1. KINDERGARTEN AND VARIED OCCUPATIONS.

Everything that can be devised in the way of higher technical instruction will fail if our primary and secondary schools are not efficient. Everything therefore that tends to promote the intelligence of children from the earliest age is of importance. In this sense I would urge the adoption of kindergarten schools in every district throughout New Zealand; for, to my mind, the methods of kindergarten work are of the truest educational value. With its clay-modelling, paper-folding, mat-weaving, stick-building, &c., the child's life is made interesting and instructive. Manual instruction is in fact commenced, for notions of work, order, and neatness are at once instilled into them.

Herbert Spencer once said, "The school courses of England leave out almost entirely that which most nearly concerns the business of life. Why is it," he asks, "that clerical work is considered more genteel than carpentry and similar occupations? Is it that fathers and mothers consider manual work degrading, or is it the fear of what society will say?" Such remarks were undoubtedly applicable a few years ago to English education, but the cause is rapidly disappearing. Great changes in methods and ideas of instruction have taken place within recent years. Kindergarten methods are widely adopted in the standard instruction, and in many districts are compulsory. Manual instruction in wood and iron, and domestic instruction, is now taught in every county in England. In no single instance have I found the primary-school teachers speak adversely of the new order of instruction, but, on the contrary, the highest and warmest praise has been given.

Our New Zealand system of primary instruction may, I am sure, follow with advantage the changes made in England. Our children undoubtedly learn to read, write, and cipher, but this is not all that is required in a colony such as New Zealand, where fully 90 per cent. of our school children must enter agricultural or industrial pursuits.

There can be no doubt that a child's school-life gives a bias to his future career. Why, then, should instruction not be given in those subjects which will aid more directly to fit a boy for his after-life? Children should be taught how to work and to love work—that is, if education means fitting a man for his future.

Many years ago I urged the introduction of varied occupations as a part of the Standard work, and having given special attention to this subject whilst in England, I return with a still stronger impression of the necessity of such a change in our course of instruction.

Between kindergarten work and the work of the Standards there is at present an unfortunate gap. Why should the occupations and methods of the kindergarten (the truest system of education) be completely dropped where they are likely to be most beneficial? I strongly urge the advisability of continuing such exercises as clay-modelling, paper-cutting and -folding, and use of coloured papers, bricklaying, wire-work, cardboard-work, brush-work, &c., in the Standards. I find that in some schools these lessons, combined with drawing, singing, and drill, occupy practically the afternoons of Standard I., and in many cases Standard II., including object-lessons; and opinions are strongly expressed as to the better efficiency of other work in consequence.

I suggest, therefore, as a means of bridging the gap between kindergarten and Standard work, that the following exercises be introduced as a part of the ordinary course of the Standards: (1) Modelling in clay; (2) cutting-out in paper and folding; (3) bricklaying; (4) wire-work; (5) modelling in cartridge-paper or cardboard; (6) brush-work, from a sketch or from the object. The materials for all such exercises should be provided by the Education Board of the district, or by the Education Department through the Board. In no instance have I found the schools supplying their own material; this fact has, undoubtedly, contributed greatly to the success of the work. Such stores as are required are applied for upon forms provided once or twice yearly at a given period.

There is no desire upon my part to increase the burden of teachers with regard to the number of subjects taught, as I have already stated a change in the syllabus is necessary if time is to be devoted to hand- and eye-training exercises. Nor do I suggest that all the exercises named should be introduced; freedom of choice and the gradual introduction of this work is all that I ask.

The course of work pursued varies in the different districts: In London freedom of choice is given, but it is necessary that work in varied occupations shall be continued as a part of the Standard work. The Burleigh Road School contributes excellent work in cardboard-modelling, mounting coloured papers in various design forms, and clay-modelling; Thomas Street School, a very systematic course of brush-work, cutting-out and modelling; Alma Road School, a very elaborate course of brush-work and design. Birmingham sets forth the work definitely in the following order: Standard I., paper-folding and cutting; Standard II., bricklaying and parcelling; Standard III., wire-work; Standard IV., cardboard-modelling.

No hard-and-fast code of work is laid down in any of the sections named, as it is considered it would only cramp the usefulness of the work in obtaining accuracy and intelligence. Discretion is left to the teacher to lead—not push—the children on to such exercises as they can accomplish intelligently. One hour per week is required to be devoted to the exercises in addition to the time set apart for drawing.

In the introduction of this work in our New Zealand schools the question of the time available is one of importance. I suggest that one hour per week be given in Standards I. to IV. for varied occupations, and two hours and a half per week in Standards V. and VI. for manual or domestic instruction. As a guide to teachers in this matter, I have obtained a copy of a time-table of the Rea Street School, Birmingham, which will be found in Appendix A.

The great importance of the subjects named as a means of training in handiness leads me to give brief information relating to each section, suggesting that one hour should be devoted to the course of exercises as laid down by the Birmingham Board for Standards I. to IV.