

many schoolmasters have complained; or, worse than all, revelling in the dirt of the creek or the gutter for the greater part of the day, or on most days of the week, and thus becoming habituated to idleness—the parent of vice, the foster-parent of evil instincts. I can at once indicate families whose children from either of the above causes—excessive industry or thorough idleness—are receiving little, if any, education; and I am also led to infer that a much greater amount of truant-playing has been going on last year than has been generally supposed. These circumstances lead me to recommend the adoption of the compulsory clauses in those very districts in which the swollen numbers obscure the necessity for the adoption of this measure—I mean in the city and suburbs of Christchurch.

For the present year, all circumstances considered, I think the following a reasonable average age as an estimate of the efficient working of the standard routine, although many scholars will pass much younger:—

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Average age for classes passing	14	13	12	10½	9	8

The average age result should prove an important criterion, stimulus, and corrective; a comparison of the age of scholars who pass with the ordinary age, will, to some extent, test the merit of the full percentage of passes. The low average age in the higher standards, if out of proportion with the rest of the school, often indicates scholarship preparation and excessive attention to the advanced scholars, to the neglect of the rest of the school; but not so where the ages and the numbers passed are in steady gradation throughout all classes. The discrepancy as to the large schools passing the lowest standards older or later than in the outside districts is under correction, and the results are beginning to approximate in schools of better organization. A tendency formerly existed to retain in school, to swell the number passing the highest standards, scholars up to sixteen or seventeen years of age—(even now instances occur)—whose instruction drew off the teachers' attention from those who most needed it; but the number passed does not seem so much to excel when the age and the length of time on the roll are considered. Another important criterion of the average age is that it tests the leniency, strictness, or unusual severity of the examiner, and corrects the imputation of it; for, if throughout a district this average of those passing does not exceed an ascertained standard, the tests cannot have been too strict, much less can they have been severe. It would be very satisfactory by means of this result to compare the general proficiency of the different provincial districts. Among the most satisfactory features observable during the past year are the acquirement of greater skill in the speciality of infants' school organization, and the development of the pupil-teacher system. There is still a difficulty, but less than in former years, in finding teachers competent to supply any vacancy in the infants' school staff; but the new buildings, with very few exceptions, are being better adapted to the teaching of the infants' classes, and teachers are paying greater attention to the organization, supervision, and teaching of this department.

The training of and the work done by the pupil-teacher have now attained a much higher efficiency than in the earlier years of this institution. The fourth-year pupil-teacher of 1879 is a great improvement upon the generality of those of 1875—the first year of the full operation of the system—till then only in its infancy; the instruction of the pupil-teachers, and their private study, are better carried out; the papers done by some of them would be creditable to trained students and other candidates for certificates, and their teaching, where they have had competent training, is far in advance of that of novices, little, if any, of whose energies have been directed to the acquirement of skill in the conduct and control of a school, or even of a class. I find a pupil-teacher ably conducting the infants' school, as at West Christchurch, Woodend, &c., &c., and efficiently conducting, controlling, and teaching classes of forty or fifty scholars in several large schools, doing the work better and at about half the pay of assistants in the same schools. The "little pupil-teacher" is almost a myth—an inspection of the stalwart youths at the recent examination would correct the idea; some few are small at first, but most of them rapidly outgrow this cause of complaint. The efficiency of their work is mostly placed at a premium by the examination results, and there can be no doubt that they are, next to the teachers who train them, the cheapest and most efficient arm of the service. Had we twice as many of them, and equally as good as those we have, our schools would be cheaper and better taught; and there is no fear of their overstocking the supply of teachers, since the majority of them find other provision or occupation, and make the most intelligent housekeepers, mechanics, clerks, and business men. There are, however, unfortunately some lamentable failures, year by year, of pupil-teachers from the same schools, which afford an irrefragable proof of their inefficient training. It is worthy of observation that, while uniform regulations have been made for the examinations for certificates and standards throughout the colony, yet that, probably in deference to the recent provision by the several Education Boards for the training and instruction of the pupil-teachers in their respective districts, this important link in the educational system is on so different a footing that possibly a third-year pupil-teacher in one may be equivalent to a "fourth" in another, or a "second" in some other provincial district. I would respectfully suggest that the time has now come for placing the pupil-teacher system on a similar footing throughout the colony, and that a great economy of time and money would be effected by their examination upon a uniform basis.

I have, &c.,

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