

Table E2 gives the number of certificated teachers in public schools, exclusive of those engaged in secondary schools or as special assistants in district high schools. From the table it will be seen that the teachers employed in primary-school work in the Dominion in December, 1907, numbered 3,301, or ninety-four more than in the year preceding. Of this total, 2,436 were fully certificated, while the comparatively large number of 865, or 26·2 per cent. of the whole, either possessed no recognised examination status or had not yet completed the necessary qualification.

Table E3 gives, with distinctions of sex, the numbers of all the holders of certificates of each class engaged in the public schools under the several Education Boards as at the 31st December, 1907.

For some years past it has been a matter of common remark that the proportion of uncertificated teachers has shown a decided tendency to increase, and upon the statistics disclosed in this connection have not uncommonly been based conclusions unfavourable to the conditions and prospects of the teaching profession. It has been said that the schools are now not so well served as in the past, that the conditions are not sufficiently good to retain the best teachers, that many in consequence have left the service for different occupations, and their places have been taken by others less fitted to fill their positions. The statistics cannot be disputed, but so pessimistic a view of their bearing omits to take account of some salient facts, in the light of which it may fairly be maintained that, far from justifying the conclusions drawn, what appears to point to a process of deterioration is really in large measure incidental to successive steps of educational progress, and is the direct outcome partly of more liberal conditions, partly of a better conception of the standard of education which should be expected in the Dominion from those entrusted with the work of the schools.

Up to the year 1902 the number of fully certificated teachers employed in the primary public schools showed year by year a steady increase in line with the increased attendance. The number then returned was 2,516, or 84 per cent. of the total. Thereafter the increase of uncertificated teachers, both relatively and absolutely, comes prominently into notice. In the annual reports regret has on several occasions been expressed at the tendency observed, and the explanation has been offered that the Teachers' Salaries Act of 1901 created such a large number of new adult positions that the supply of certificated teachers in the Dominion was inadequate to fill them. As under the schedule to that Act, on the school attendance then existing, and without regard to any natural increase, some 548 additional adult teachers were required, partly to take the place of pupil-teachers then materially reduced in number, it is manifest that this explanation is a sound one. Under the circumstances it was unavoidable that for years thereafter a number of uncertificated teachers should be appointed to occupy the vacant positions. This is not, however, by any means the whole explanation that may properly be given. At least two other important causes of wide-reaching effect have to be noted, in both of which the steps taken, as in the case of the Teachers' Salaries Act of 1901, have been without question steps of educational advance; yet both have had an obvious and immediate effect in swelling the ranks of the uncertificated. There is, in the first place, to be considered the large increase in small schools characteristic of recent years, the direct outcome of the much more liberal provisions now made for capitation payments in such cases. Many remote localities that under earlier conditions would have gone without any educational advantages whatever are now served by household or other schools of the smallest size. There has thus been brought into the service a considerable number of persons who, while ranked as teachers, and doing indubitably useful work in their position, do not and cannot be expected to possess any recognised teaching status. In such positions certificated teachers are in most cases out of the question; as a matter of necessity those to whom the benefits are extended must content themselves with something less, and within the limits of any possible scheme of payments it must ever be so.