

The objects desired by the Government in passing the Native Schools Act of 1871 were as follows :— Firstly, the establishment of village schools wherever a sufficient Native population and other circumstances rendered it possible ; secondly, the instruction of the Natives in the English language only except in cases where the location of an English teacher might be found impossible ; thirdly, the working of the village schools through the agency of the Maoris themselves associated with and aided by such Europeans as might be willing to work with them on School Committees ; fourthly, the contribution by the Natives of such proportion of the expense of school buildings and schoolmaster's salary as might be agreed upon ; and, fifthly, the careful inspection and supervision of all schools receiving Government aid.

There were no fixed standards of education, every master teaching what he thought best. The syllabus of instruction in vogue seems to have been very simple, and necessarily so—English, arithmetic, spelling, writing, and geography.

The accommodation was more or less unsatisfactory, the equipment poor and unsuitable, and in general the attendance was very irregular, but in spite of such difficulties and shortcomings the influence of such schools was undoubted. Under this *régime* our oldest Native village schools, many of them still in flourishing condition, were established—Tokomaru Bay, Tuparoa, Waiomatatini, Matata, Ohaeawai, Kaikohe, Waima, Pukepoto, Ahipara—and to-day the sons, by their loyal support and hearty appreciation of the schools, show that the seed planted by their fathers thirty-five years ago has borne generous fruit.

During these years the Native schools were under the direct control of the Native Department. They were transferred to the Education Department at the end of the year 1879, and with the transfer came the first definite arrangement of a curriculum. The Native Schools Code of 1880 provided for the establishment of schools, the appointment of teachers, the conduct of the school, and Native-school standards of education. Of these there were four, the subjects of instruction being English, reading, writing, spelling, geography, arithmetic, and sewing for girls. The central ideal in early Native education was, to quote from a report of Mr. Pope, late Inspector of Native Schools, “ to bring an untutored but intelligent and high-spirited people into line with our civilisation by placing in Maori settlements European school buildings and European families to serve as teachers, and especially as examples of a new and more desirable mode of life. This admirable ideal, remarkable alike for its thoroughgoing effectiveness and its simplicity, was fully operative when the Department took over the Native schools, and in a statement of the advances made by the Education Department it is only right to acknowledge that the leading idea which governs Native-school work was in full operation when we took the schools over.”

Since then, though the mode of payment of salaries and the amount payable have been varied from time to time, no radical changes have been made in the syllabus except that amendments have been made and additional provisions inserted as they became necessary.

The code in force before the present revision took place—that of 1897—defined a syllabus of work for four standards, the subjects comprised being reading, spelling, writing, English, arithmetic, and sewing, to which were added health, drawing, singing, and drill. Pupils above the Fourth Standard of the Native Schools Code were expected to be able to attempt the work prescribed for Standards V and VI of the public schools. The standard of exemption was then Standard IV, and from this and from the fact that no syllabus had been definitely arranged for standards above IV arose the impression that still obtains in many places—namely, that in the Native schools children do not go beyond the Fourth Standard.

The principal changes involved in the new syllabus are made necessary by the general progress of the schools, by modern ideas in education, and by various alterations in method that experience has shown to be desirable. There is no subversion of the principles laid down in the Act of 1871. Handwork, including under that term such industrial training as it is possible to give in primary schools of the kind, represents the new factor. The changes in mode of life that have occurred amongst the Maoris since 1880, and the advance made by the schools since 1897, have rendered it necessary that the syllabus of instruction in Native schools should approximate much more closely to that in public schools, and for this reason the new syllabus follows closely the syllabus of work prescribed for public schools by the regulations of 1904. There is an additional reason for this approximation : in the majority of our Native schools are to be found European children for whom it is desirable that educational facilities shall be provided that, in the absence of a European school in the district, shall place them at no disadvantage. We claim that the European child attending a Native school can attain therein the standard of proficiency of the public school of similar size and similarly situated, and we have to shape our syllabus of instruction accordingly. This is all the more imperative from the fact that the policy of the Government has always been in the direction of coeducation of the races : separate schools are not contemplated. It is interesting to note that the American Government, upon acquiring possession of the Philippine Islands, set about the task of educating the Filipinos in manner almost identical with that prescribed for our Native schools. “ The aim has been and still is, to place the elements of an English education within the reach of every social class in every municipality and every hamlet of the archipelago. During the past year [1904] a course of study has been prescribed for the primary schools by the General Superintendent, which includes instruction in the English language, arithmetic, geography (nature-study), singing, drawing, handwork consisting of school gardening and simple tool-work for the boys, sewing and elementary housekeeping for the girls, physical exercises, and the training of character. The Filipino language is not allowed to be used in the public schools even by the Filipino teachers, primary instruction, with the exception of a very few schools, being conducted entirely in the English language. More than this, the conversation of the class-room is in English, which is taught even to the small beginner without the assistance of translation, the first steps of the pupil being so arranged as to obviate its employment, and the choice of the Filipino people is at present overwhelmingly in favour of English instruction.”—(Report of General Superintendent of Education, Manila, 1904.)