

In the report of the Minister of Education for 1909 the numbers of certificated and uncertificated teachers, omitting those employed in Grades 1 and 0 (very small schools in which uncertificated teachers are mainly employed), are represented as 80·2 and 19·8 per cent. respectively. If the numbers given above for this district are treated on the same basis, the proportion would show 83·4 per cent. of certificated to 16·6 per cent. of uncertificated, so that in this respect the district does not suffer by comparison with the rest of the Dominion.

Of late the teaching profession can hardly be described as highly popular with the “brainiest” of our youth, and the many advantages bestowed upon it by recent legislation have probably not yet rendered it sufficiently attractive, though present indications are towards a turn of the tide. An attraction that is still lacking would be afforded by the adoption of a definite scheme of promotion, which would guarantee to a capable teacher who has proved his ability and given every satisfaction in his professional work some certainty of advancement within a reasonable time. It would necessitate as keen a competition in matters pertaining to his profession, attach more value to the personality of the teacher, and altogether remove from him the temptation to gain favour by arts or qualifications that in no way increase his fitness or add to his dignity as a teacher.

The Inspectors’ annual return for the year 1910 contains the following summary:—

Classes.				Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	Average Age for the Dominion in 1909.
						Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	117	103	14 10	15 0
" VI	...	...	...	425	411	13 10	13 11
" V	...	...	...	516	501	13 2	13 0
" IV	...	...	...	585	565	12 2½	12 3
" III	...	...	...	666	648	11 4	11 4
" II	...	...	...	704	685	10 2½	10 3
" I	...	...	...	740	716	9 1	9 2
Preparatory	...	...	...	2,213	2,048	6 11	6 11
Totals for 1910				5,966	5,671	11 5	...
Totals for 1909				5,795	5,540	11 4	...

The returns have been made out from the class-lists furnished us by head teachers on the completion of their annual examinations in December. In some instances these examinations were held prior to November, the classification and promotions being in many of the small sole-teacher schools revised, modified, or wholly determined by us. In all cases ages were computed as on 1st December, 1910. As many of the class-lists, of which so much complaint was made last year, came under our review while in the presence of the teachers, we more readily got the necessary alterations and amendments made, and so found less difficulty this year in compiling our return. A most common fault is that of inconsistency between the marking and the promotions determined by it. Scarcely any school return was entirely free from this. In arithmetic, for example, in which promotion is determined by the marks in that subject alone, instances were to be found, even among our leading schools, of a pupil with a mark below the general pass-mark being promoted, and that without a single word in explanation of such action. In English the regulation making composition as well as reading essential to promotion was often lost sight of, and so also was the provision that writing or spelling is necessary.

One hundred and three of the Standard VII pupils belong to the secondary classes of our district high schools. Standards VI, V, and IV are each somewhat smaller in numbers this year by about 35, but all the lower classes are larger, the preparatory by 172.

In his report to the Minister of Education the Inspector-General of Schools points out that the proportion that the children in the preparatory classes bear to the whole roll has steadily increased throughout the Dominion for five years back, till in 1909 it amounted to 36·4 per cent. In this district the percentage at the same time was 35·2 per cent., somewhat below the general average, but this year it has increased to 37 per cent. In his investigation into the causes of the increase the Inspector-General attributes it in part to a larger proportion of children between the ages of five and seven entering the schools, but mainly to the fact that the children are spending a longer time in preparatory classes than they formerly spent. He also remarks: “There is little doubt that, generally speaking, more attention has been paid of late years to the methods of teaching young children: more natural methods have been introduced, more handwork, and probably more work calculated to call forth the natural activities and to stimulate the imagination of those in the ‘infant’ classes. Certainly it is not desirable to begin what is called the ‘formal work’ too soon, even in reading, and still less in arithmetic, but there is surely no reason why from the very beginning there should not be systematic training of language, especially by means of stories told to the children and by the children, and by means of the simple reporting by the children of facts coming naturally within their observation.”

The newer methods in the infant classes may justify the spending of a longer time in these classes, although in other countries, where the newer methods have been longer in vogue and are more fully carried out, it has not been found necessary to retard the progress of the children in reading. If the standard of work in the preparatory classes had been generally raised, then the