

1914-1918 Snapshot of Education



Sir George a



Dr William Anderson

The Department of Education

The Department of Education in 1914 was just 37 years old. Local education boards were largely in charge of primary schools, early childhood education seemed non-existent and tertiary education, although established, was still evolving.

The Department was in charge of conducting annual examinations for junior and senior national scholarships, junior and senior free places in secondary schools, district high schools and technical school and teachers' certificates. It also held exams for admission to, and promotion, in the Public Service.

In February 1916 there were education boards in Auckland, Taranaki, Wanganui, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Nelson, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. The boards set up, maintained and controlled public schools. They were in charge of technical schools and technical classes, if they were the controlling authorities. They could appoint teachers, arrange transport of children and define school hours of opening and holidays.

While the local education boards held a lot of control, the Department administered pay and staffing for primary schools, and in 1914 a national system of appointment and grading of teachers was created. With this, the Department took on the role of inspection of schools which had previously been the responsibility of boards. In 1914, women were allowed to become inspectors – a reflection of their increasing status in education.

Most of the Department's staff were teachers in Native Schools for Māori. Other staff included teachers and support staff in special schools and homes for delinquent or intellectually disabled children, industrial schools and training farms. The Department also had staff that inspected children's health.

Many of the Department's men who served in World War I were clerks and cadets. The cadet role seemed to be the starting position in the public service and a generic role. The role of clerk was likely the next step on the ladder.

From 1914, physical education became compulsory in schools and the Department created a team of physical education instructors and inspectors that travelled the country working with schools.

The men in charge of the Department of Education – George Hogben and William Anderson

Sir George Hogben

George Hogben had been Secretary of Education since 1899. In 1915, the name of that role became the Director of Education.

George was a former teacher and Chief Inspector of Schools and he'd also been one of New Zealand's top seismologists.

He was well known for his belief that education could bring about social change and he introduced free secondary school education and revised the primary school curriculum.

The School Journal was established during his time and became the main communication channel to schools.

He was personally affected by the war with the loss of two sons.

After retiring in 1915, George died in April 1920 at his home in Khandallah, Wellington.

Dr William Anderson

Like George Hogben, William Anderson had been a leading inspector of schools. He became Director of Education in May 1915 after George retired.

His best achievement was heading the Department through one of its most difficult times during the war years when teacher and Department staff shortages were chronic. At times William intervened personally to help solve shortages by writing to the Defence Department asking for teachers in service to be returned to schools.

He retired in March 1921 at age 65 and died ten years later in 1931.

Schools

By the war years, all children between seven and 14 had to attend school. There were around 2,500 schools in New Zealand with around 190,000 students.

In 1913, secondary schooling became free. However, it was far less established than primary schooling at this time.

Children who passed Standard 6 (Year 8) in a number of subjects were awarded Proficiency. The Competency award was given to children who passed Standard 5 (Year 7) and this meant they could go onto high school. If students passed the public service entrance or intermediate exam they could go further at high school.

Here's what the New Zealand History website had to say about what children were taught:

“At first, primary education aimed to give children a solid grounding in ‘the three Rs’ – reading, (w)riting and (a) rithmetic – along with history and geography. In addition, boys were to be taught military drill and girls sewing. Some subjects were divided into branches, for instance: reading and writing included study of grammar, spelling, dictation and composition.

Civics and moral training had been taught formally since 1904, but during and after the First World War there was greater emphasis on preparing students to become patriotic citizens, and flag-saluting ceremonies and observance of Anzac Day and other imperial occasions became widespread in primary schools. There was also new stress on preparing children for what was seen as appropriate gender roles.”

While primary schools were mostly co-educational, boys and girls were largely kept separate. They had to play and learn separately in the classroom and playground and sometimes even had to go through different school gates.

Native schools and the education of Māori

In the early 20th Century, the New Zealand Government had a policy of assimilating Māori towards the European way of living and education was no exception. In 1918 there were around 119 native schools for Māori and, as part of the assimilation policy, the only language taught in these schools was English.

There were around 5,000 students in native schools who were taught basic reading, writing and arithmetic with heavy emphasis on manual instruction and personal hygiene. Not all Māori were taught in native schools and around 5,000 Māori attended regular public schools.

Te Ara, the New Zealand Encyclopedia says: “The schools suffered from delays inherent in a centralised system run from Wellington. It could take years to establish a school, many had inadequate facilities and decisions relied on the annual visit of an inspector on horseback. Pupils often had to travel long distances and were at the mercy of bad weather. Families moving for seasonal work also disrupted

attendance. Teachers were of variable quality and initially most were untrained. Most were Pākehā, although some schools had Māori junior assistants.”

Teachers

Teachers in primary schools were mostly women and in secondary schools they made up 40-50 percent of the teaching staff. Women weren't paid as much as men so were cheaper for boards to employ.

There was a lack of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. There were pupil-teachers who were older students, usually female, who taught younger children. Often teachers didn't have a teaching certificate.

Shortages of teachers

As New Zealand was largely rural at the time, just over half of the country's public schools had just one teacher. The loss of even just one teacher to war service had serious implications for a school.

The problem of teacher shortages was becoming a major concern for the Department by June 1916. To add to the shortage, the Alien Enemy Teachers Act was passed in 1915 and meant that non-British subjects who had been citizens of an enemy state at any time couldn't be employed in schools.

To help increase teacher supply, more women teachers were employed and teachers due to retire were encouraged to stay on for longer. In early 1918 the education boards and the Department were pushing for teachers to be returned to schools where possible.

By the end of the war, over 1,000 teachers had served and nearly 200 were killed or died from their wounds.

Tertiary education

By the end of the war, there were around 3,500 tertiary students.

The New Zealand University oversaw tertiary education and was the country's examining body. Four teaching institutions were affiliated to the New Zealand University: the Auckland University College, Victoria University College, Canterbury College and Otago University.

Each of these institutions specialised in particular areas. Otago had schools for medicine, dentistry, mining, metallurgical engineering and home science. Canterbury had mechanical, electrical and civil engineering, Auckland had schools of mines and commerce and Victoria specialised in law and science.

Teachers were trained in four colleges in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Sources:

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