READING IN INFANT CLASSES

The Approach to Reading in a Group of Canterbury Schools, Considered in Relation to Recent Developments Overseas.

Being the Thesis Submitted as Part of the Examination for M.A. in Education, 1941.

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Miss Ruth Trevor

Code number 86
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1. CHOICE OF SUBJECT.

In the last three years, as an Associate worker in Child Guidance in the Department of Education at Canterbury College, the writer has examined twelve city school children referred for backwardness in reading and has been responsible for the remedial treatment of half this number. (1) In the matter of general intelligence four of these children were slightly below average, but not sufficiently dull as to be ineducable, three were about average, while five were well above average. The degree of reading disability varied, but none of the twelve had reached a satisfactory level of reading achievement. It could with justification be concluded that the methods of teaching reading in the schools from which these children came had not been successful so far as they were concerned. (2)

Various investigations have shown that provision for the specifically retarded child in New Zealand is urgently needed. The large number of applications for admission to the first remedial class opened in February of this year, showed that the incidence of backwardness in reading is high. Investigators in the United States have recorded the same position. (3) It is now recognised that the

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(1) This does not represent by any means all the cases of this nature referred to the clinic, but only those with whom the writer was directly associated.


(3) Durrell (15%); Monroe (12%).
causes of specific retardation are many and varied and may be traced
to the child himself as well as to his environment. In spite of
the very numerous investigations that have been made into this ques-
tion there is by no means complete agreement as to the relative impor-
tance of the various causes, or to the possible combinations of two or
more factors that may be at the base of the trouble.

Likewise, much research has been done to discover the various
factors that make for success in reading. But it is not enough to
know the facts—we must also discover how far this knowledge is
applied in current teaching practice and school organisation. It is
essential, first of all, to be aware of the conditions in the schools
which bring about the need for remedial measures, referred to earlier
in this chapter; and secondly to be thoroughly familiar with the most
up-to-date developments in the particular field in which the remedial
work is undertaken.

According to American writers, the greatest number of
children who fail promotion, do so in the Infant Room, in their first
year; and by far the largest percentage of pupils who later repeat a
year, do so on account of poor reading ability. It looks, therefore,
as if a fruitful field of research might lie in a study of reading
at the infant level.

In deciding upon the subject for a thesis, the writer was
advised by the Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational
Research. He pointed out some of the problems of infant teachers

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(1) 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education,
(2) Op cit. p.412.
(3) Gates "Improvement of Reading", p.2.
which were evident from the survey of the School Entrance Age made by his Council. Sooner or later, he thought the Council would be investigating the whole question of reading in the Infant Room, and he suggested that a beginning might be made by studying the position in a group of Canterbury Schools. It was thought that something of value might result from a comparison of such findings with the best practices abroad.

2. AIDS AND METHODS.

The aim of the thesis is accordingly a two-fold one — to find what are the methods of teaching reading in infant classes; and to compare these with the methods advocated by leading authorities in Great Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

Permission was obtained from the Education Board to make contact with Canterbury Schools. The Board promised assistance in the matter of classification, attendance and addresses of schools, and placed at the writer's disposal Inspectors' Reports and Education Gazettes. Because of the remoteness of many of the schools, and the limited time available for personal contact, it was decided to ask for the required information by means of a questionnaire to each school. This was accompanied by instructions setting out as clearly as possible what was wanted under each heading; and by letters to the Head Teachers and teachers of infant classes explaining the nature of the investigation and asking for their co-operation.

When planning the form of the questionnaire, the following main points were kept in mind:

(1) Bulletin No. 4, December 1940, p. 25
(2) Appendix II, page vi.
(I) How the child was prepared for formal reading, and how he was judged to be ready for it.

(II) At what age formal reading was begun.

(III) What methods were used to teach reading,

(IV) What were considered by teachers to be their difficulties and problems, and their suggestions for overcoming them.

A list was made of the topics upon which information was required, and the drafting of the questionnaire was done on the basis of these and the four considerations mentioned above.

3. SCOPE.

Excluding intermediate schools, there are three hundred and twenty nine primary schools under the Canterbury Education Board. The distribution of these schools on the basis of roll numbers is shown in Table 1, Column 1.

<table>
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<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>DISTRIBUTION TABLE SHOWN:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I) Number of Schools in Canterbury</td>
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<td>(II) Number selected for purposes of this study</td>
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<td>(III) Replies received</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll No.</th>
<th>Total No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. Selected</th>
<th>Replies</th>
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<td>Over 500</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>400-499</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-399</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>200-299</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>100-199</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-24</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>
As the results of this investigation did not appear to depend for their validity upon large numbers of cases, but rather upon practices most generally followed, it was not considered necessary to include all these schools. Enough were selected to provide a fair sampling of urban, suburban, and rural conditions. For this purpose, the summary of attendances for the second term of 1940 was obtained from the Board Office. The schools were classified under the following districts:

- C - Christchurch urban area
- T - Timaru urban area.
- N.W. - North-west ward, including Westland and Grey.
- M - Middle ward - (Christchurch rural area)
- S - South ward (Timaru rural area)

By omitting those classified "T", "N.W." and "S", there were one hundred and five schools which afforded a reasonably representative cross-section. Table I, Column II, gives the distribution of the selected schools, again on the basis of roll numbers. The relationship between the different types of school, as judged by roll numbers, is not much altered by this method. More than half the schools selected have roll numbers of less than a hundred but it was considered that on account of remoteness, the fact that many of the teachers were inexperienced, more of these schools would fail to return the information. Thus, the investigation was planned to include the infant classes in one hundred and five Canterbury schools, urban, suburban, and rural.

The questionnaires were sent out at the beginning of April, and the teachers were asked to reply by the end of that month.
Table I, Column III, gives a classification of the schools from which replies were received. The results were disappointing, although it was possible to proceed with the analysis on the basis of those received. It may be relevant to state that three of the city schools were without infant mistresses, and those teachers who were relieving felt diffident about sending in the replies based on their own experience of infant teaching. Also, in five city schools, the infant mistess was either in her first term or her last, and felt that the time was not propitious for the filling-in of the questionnaire.

However, in only one of these cases was there a direct refusal to do so. With regard to country schools, it may be noted that teachers are fairly constantly on the move, and, moreover, have had very little experience in infant teaching. This may account in some part for the poor response from country teachers. Although Table I, Column III shows a representation of all types of schools, it is a matter for regret that more information was not obtained from country teachers.

The material upon which this thesis is based will be derived as follows:

1. From replies to the questionnaire.
2. From the results of interviews with the Adviser to Infant and Kindergarten Departments.
3. From visits to the nearer city schools.
4. From literature relating to New Zealand conditions.
5. From overseas literature on the subject of reading, with particular reference to the infant stages.

NOTE: As is well known, theory and practice do not move together, but rather theory tends to outrun practice. In New Zealand, as in every country in the world, both good and bad conditions are to be
found in schools. There are probably a good many schools in England, the U.S.A. and elsewhere, that employ less up-to-date methods than do many schools in New Zealand, but there are also a good many whose methods are more up-to-date than any here. Consequently, the aim of the writer will be to collect the best opinions of practice abroad, as an indication of the goals towards which teaching practice in New Zealand schools may be directed.
CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING READING

There are almost as many systems of teaching reading as there are authors of sets of readers. Durrell says "There is no one best way to teach reading.........We have not yet discovered a definite series of steps which a teacher may follow with the assurance that all pupils will grow in reading ability in the most efficient manner. It is unlikely that research will ever discover a single method which will be the most efficient one for all pupils and all teachers." In the past, reading has been taught by one or more of the so-called traditional methods - the alphabet is, the phonics, the word, and the sentence methods.

1. THE ALPHABETIC METHOD.

This went into disfavour about sixty years ago. The child began by learning the names of the letters and proceeded to the spelling and pronouncing of two-letter and then three-letter combinations. The process was laborious and not even remotely connected with the interests and needs of the children. Many left school before they realised that reading was something more than "the memorisation of gibberish". Huey has said, "The value of the practice in learning to spell doubtless had much to do with blinding centuries of teachers to its uselessness for the reading of words and sentences." Those who became fluent readers probably discovered other more effective methods.

2. THE PHONIC OR PHONETIC METHOD.

This was a substitution of the sound of the letter for its name, and came into fairly common use about 1870. Various means

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(1) Durrell: "Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities", p.1
(2) National Education Association: Research Bulletin No.XIII, 15 n.791.
were devised for overcoming the difficulties caused by the unphonetic irregularities of English spelling and pronunciation. But all these complicated the learning process to such an extent that John Dewey and others, at the beginning of this century, recommended that the teaching of reading should be postponed till the age of eight or nine. A modification of the phonetic method, known as the "blending" method, has come into prominence. It is still in favour in America, mostly among older teachers. Words are analysed, not into elementary sounds, but into larger and more natural sound units, generally called 

(1) phonograms. Harris says of the phonetic method, "It has two definite points in its favour. If properly taught it helps the child to learn to read in a systematic left to right direction, and when mastered, it provides a technique by means of which most unfamiliar words can be deciphered." The disadvantages are numerous. Apart from that concerning the unphonetic character of many English words, there is the disturbing and all too well-known fact that some children seem unable to blend sounds and recognise the corresponding word. There is also the difficulty that the learning of phonics frequently hinders spelling rather than helps it. Also, left to right progression may be more efficiently learnt than by practising phonic combinations.

Present-day systems of teaching reading place some stress on the analysis of words, but not at the beginning stages. A vocabulary of sight words is first built up. Dolch considers that children with mental ages below seven show little ability at phonetic analysis, even after systematic instruction.

(1) Harris: "How to Increase Reading Ability", p.30.
3. THE WORD METHOD.

Comenius is credited with having devised this, but it was not introduced into U.S.A. till after 1870. It is based on the idea, considered psychologically sound, that a word has a character of its own, apart from the collection of letters which it contains. Children can learn to recognise a whole word about as quickly as they learn to recognise a single letter. It is possible for the child to develop a reading vocabulary of sight words in a relatively shorter time by this method than by the alphabetic or the phonic methods. But its greatest value is undoubtedly as an auxiliary method. Alone it gives the pupil no means of attacking new words. It may lead to the child's doing too much guessing. It may also result in confusion between words of similar size and shape, e.g. ball, bell; bone, bore.

4. THE SENTENCE METHOD:

This was generally in use in U.S.A. after 1885. It assumes that the sentence is the unit of meaning, and it was argued that reading sentences should be taught from the first. In the early days of this method, practice in word discrimination was provided through the use of the same words over and over again in different combinations. In many cases, as various writers have pointed out, the pages made just as good sense reading from the bottom line up, as from the top line down. Plot and story were sacrificed to provide for word and sentence repetition. About 1910, readers were introduced, making use of folk tales and nursery rhymes, but such large vocabularies were employed that prolonged word study took up the time that
should have been devoted to reading. Then came the method of studying the story beforehand, so that the reading might be straightforward. By the time the children were allowed to read the story they knew it so well by heart that all interest was lost. Faulty reading habits often ensued. One writer found that many first grade children taught by this method were fluent "readers", but observation of their eye movements proved them to be merely reciting from memory whilst their eyes wandered at random over the page.

Words are the natural, symbolic basis of the language. In the history of language, new words are coined very slowly, and only accepted after long usage. No alteration in the character of a particular word results from the individual's use of it. The sentence, however, is a matter of individual creation, and should never be stereotyped. If it is made so, in the reading process, then the principles of language are violated. The child in the first stages of reading, cannot read whole sentences at a time unless he has himself created them, or unless he is reading only one type of sentence. This process of standardisation has operated in the construction of the reading books used in New Zealand schools. The same type of sentence, and a poor one at that, occurs over and over again. The creative spirit that belongs so essentially to the sentence - the purpose served in expressing something - is entirely missing. This practice runs counter to the function of language.

The sentences which are used in the teaching of reading should be constructed by the child before they are read by him. This is generally the procedure adopted in up-to-date infant schools. Moreover, in the evolutionary process, writing has preceded reading, and
without writing, there is no need for reading. For the young child, then, reading and writing should go hand in hand. In this connection it is interesting to note the general procedure adopted in some Viennese schools prior to the German occupation.

Block printing is used, since that is what the child sees round him. The only reading-books he has are written in the mode of the child; thus

![Drawing of a child with a caption: This is Daddy]

Large wall blackboards are provided, and the child makes colossal letters, gaining facility in making them, and at the same time using his whole body in rhythmic movement. The habit of left to right progression is firmly established. Gradually the movements become smaller, and no longer involve his whole body. Once the block forms of writing are established, it is comparatively easy to evolve the script and finally the cursive form, just as these were evolved in the history of written symbols, e.g. FATHER soon becomes father and father.

By the time the cursive form is in operation, children have mastered the mechanics of reading.
A. UNITED STATES.

1. Introduction. Recent investigators into the teaching of reading have used a new line of approach - viz. the child himself. Traditional techniques were based on what was thought to be a simplification of the subject matter, so that the child would build up from the fundamental elements the complex superstructure of reading ability. (Associationism/psychology)

The new emphasis upon the child as the starting point is the result of increased knowledge in the field of psychology - particularly with regard to the learning process, the needs and interest of the child, and later the concept of individual differences.

2. Methods. Among the comparatively recent methods of teaching reading, which take into account the nature of the learning process, the concept of individual differences and the psychology of the child, are the "intrinsic" method, and the "activity-experience" method. Brief outlines and criticisms of these more recent methods are given below.

(a) Intrinsic Method. This was evolved by Gates and depends on the use of specially prepared material. Before introducing his own method, he gives outlines of various methods of teaching words. He regards the usual ones as highly artificial, and says, "They result really in a horrible mutilation of a story. It would drive an adult mad to have to get his stories in this way. Children will tolerate it merely because they will stand for a good deal of distortion of reality and prefer a story badly given

(1) "The Improvement of Reading", revised edition 1937, p. 272 et seq.
to no story at all." Gates goes on to say that this scheme robs reading of its primary charm - its attractiveness as the means of providing a story at first hand. The plan makes reading a more mechanical technique, "of reviewing a thrice-told tale". He then outlines his own method, which, he says, makes adequate preparation for a given selection by means of other reading activities. "The new words", he says, "should not be thrown in hit or miss. On the contrary, the setting for each new word should be carefully worked out so that the word is surrounded with such abundant and suggestive context clues that the pupil will be quite sure to figure it out promptly and correctly. The pupil, so to speak, is given a long enough run to enable him to jump the gap from sheer momentum, a feat he could not accomplish had he been forced to make several jumps in the same distance." He goes on to quote a few samples from "First Reader Preparatory Book!" Harris, commenting on this method, says "The method is adaptable to highly individualized instruction, as the materials are to some extent self-teaching. The use of work books to introduce vocabulary, provide added word repetition, and check on comprehension is continued in higher grades. The child learns to read through reading activities, instead of through comparatively unrelated activities. The method depends for its success upon adequate preparation. Unless the material for this preparation is available, other procedures will probably be more successful. The intrinsic method is sound psychologically and has many admirable features. It has been found by some teachers that

(1) A. I. Gates and M. E. Huber in the "Work-Play Book" series.
(2) "How to Increase Reading Ability", p. 37.
more phonetic training is needed than is provided in the second grade programme. This defect, if it is a real one, can always be remedied by a resourceful teacher. Gray, writing on materials and methods of beginner's reading, says that the approach through materials carefully prepared for general use has both limitations and advantages. Often the activities that are planned do not relate to the immediate interests of the child. Again, the use of prepared materials does away with the possibility of planning by the pupils. And also, the teaching of reading through the use of prepared materials often becomes a routine, formal procedure.

On the other hand, there are advantages. When based on the common interests of children, the early steps in learning to read may be interesting, purposeful and challenging. When properly planned, they extend and enrich the child's experiences.

They may provide ample opportunity for planning on the part of the child. Furthermore, Gray concludes, prepared materials are usually more skilfully organised and superior technically to those developed daily in the classroom. The Year Book Committee recommends the advantageous use of both procedures. Sometimes the use of reading material based on experience may afford opportunities for pupil planning, and the satisfaction of immediate interests. At other times, and particularly as reading ability increases, use should be made of what are called "sequential materials" that provide "opportunity for varying amounts of practice in harmony with individual needs."

(1) 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education, p. 89. (2) op. cit.
(b) "Activity Experience" Method. This relates beginning reading to the group and individual experiences of the child. First-grade children are started on a project or activity which involves the investigation of some large topic, such as "The Post Office", "The Railway Station". The various subjects of a conventional programme centre round this idea, and children are led to see the need for them. As stories are made up by the children, they are written on charts or on the blackboard by the teacher, and form the materials for the earliest lessons in reading. Some objections to this method are that it encourages memory reading, that too many words are introduced that will not appear in later reading books for some time, that there is not enough repetition of new words, that the content is often too difficult, and that the method is not adaptable to individual differences.

Other critics have been in favour of the method, one defending it in these words: "In real life situations, where interests are natural and motivate learning, the need for repetition is largely supplanted by intensity of experience, and by the much more extensive associations and integrations resulting from deeply satisfying experience." (1)

The main difficulty with the experience method is the danger of using too extensive a vocabulary and too little repetition. This can be avoided by a teacher who is willing to take a little trouble in modifying by means of a word list the vocabulary of the class constructed stories so as to include mainly words that will be needed. If this is done, there seems no reason why the method cannot be successfully used. It produces high motivation; it is rather a procedure for preparing children to read than a method of teaching in itself.

(1) 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education, Part 1, pp.89-91
It is interesting to note that this "Activity-Experience" method was used in the infant schools of Vienna from the early 1920's to the recent German occupation. The children made regular and frequent excursions to centres of interest in the larger community, in order to build up valuable experience. Formal teaching was begun towards the end of the first year. The children entered at the age of six.

These two methods of teaching reading are, generally speaking, the results of combining one or more aspects of older methods with some new idea on the reading process - sometimes it is little more than a change of emphasis, e.g. the "experience" method is really the sentence method, the important fact being that the sentences are made up by the children themselves, in the form of stories about some large scale investigation upon which

(1) The writer is grateful to K. R. Popper, Canterbury University College, for information on some aspects of infant teaching in Viennese schools, prior to German occupation.

A book has been written by R. Dottr, "The New Education in Austria" (New York, Day: 1930) dealing mainly with the "activity" movement. So far it has not been possible to locate a copy in New Zealand.

"Modern Trends in Education", edited by A. E. Campbell, the record of lectures given during the New Education Fellowship Conference held in New Zealand in 1937, contains an account of post-war education in Austria, under the title of "Austria and Her Children" by Dr. F. Dengler.
they are engaged. The "intrinsic" method is an attempt to teach words in an interesting way in order that the intrinsic value of the material read will not be distorted by wearying word drills.

Sixty per cent. of a group of American supervisors who were asked whether any particular system of teaching reading was followed by the schools under their jurisdiction, replied in the negative. Cooper showed that there is no agreement on a single best procedure. The Research Bulletin quotes the trends noticeable in modern teaching as follows:

1. Children are to be given practice in reading as if they were grown-up people, without goading or teaching.

2. The "intrinsic" method of teaching word recognition is recommended in a large number of cases, rather than isolated word drills.

3. There is an increasing emphasis on individual needs.

4. The trend is toward simplified vocabularies, based on scientific word lists, with ample repetition of words.

5. Fewer and simpler phonetic elements are to be mastered.

The Bulletin also stresses the need for teachers to adapt plans to their own teaching situations. It is especially important that they should choose methods which they can use effectively—methods which at the same time are "best adapted to the purposes

(4) Gates: "Improvement of Reading", p. 272 et seq.
(5) See basic list of phonetic elements, p. 20 of this chapter.
at hand, and to the abilities, needs and interests of the pupils."

Several experiments have been carried out in the attempt to establish the value and place of "phonics" in the teaching of reading. From these experiments, and from the opinions of successful teachers, it would seem that over-emphasis on phonics hinders both rapidity and thoroughness of comprehension. It is believed that thinking in this matter would be greatly clarified if the terms "word-recognition", "word-discrimination", and "word-analysis" were adopted in place of "phonic" and "phonetic" skills.

The use of extended periods in which to teach phonics is wasteful, and results in great phonic knowledge rather than more reading ability. The learning of phonics should be functional, i.e. it should take place at the same time as reading; should be related to a well-planned reading programme, and should be quite incidental to the process of thought-getting.

The best time to begin drawing attention to the phonic characteristics of words is when "the child has established the habit of thought-getting, has a reasonable stock of sight-words, and has begun to note freely gross similarities and differences in words." There should also be some selection of the phonetic elements to be taught. Some are more important than others. Some are encountered much more frequently than others, while some are learned incidentally by most children. It is agreed that the easiest sounds - "a", "o" - should be taught before difficult ones - "b", "d".

(1) M. L. Tate: "The Influence of Phonics on Silent Reading in Grade 1, Elementary School Journal, June 1937.
(2) H. L. Tate, op. cit.
(3) H. L. Tate, op. cit.
(4) 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education, p. 90
Children differ very greatly in the amount of phonetic instruction they require. In all phonetic training, words should be treated as wholes, and the left to right progression always preserved.

A basic list of phonetic elements was selected for use in Winnetka schools. It contains

1. All the short vowel sounds.
2. All simple consonant sounds.
3. Rule for lengthening vowel before "e".

Mention has been made by Bart that continued emphasis on phonics may have some relation to speech defect.

The process of reading is after all, still something of an enigma. Nobody knows just what takes place when the child synthesises the elements he has learned and develops the ability to read. It is possible, however, to teach reading efficiently without having complete knowledge. But the way to succeed is not to do as one teacher advised — "stop worrying and all will come right." Fortunately many children are not disturbed by the conditions under which they are taught, and many learn to read in spite of the methods that are used, but that is no reason for not examining one's teaching and taking notice of the experimental evidence which is available.

1. Reading Books. Some research has been carried out in order to decide what are the basic requirements so far as children's reading books are concerned.

(2) "National Education", June 1941, p. 190.
(3) W. H. Gould: "Reading Can be Taught", "National Education", August 1941.
Under a modern progressive reading scheme, the class reading book disappears. A wide range of interesting and attractive books is provided, and children may select their own reading material according to their interests. In general, the following qualities are desirable in children's books:

Attractive appearance, to include brightly coloured bindings, interesting titles, plenty of natural and artistic pictures, involving humour and action; wide margins on both sides of the page, legible type, and not too much material on a page.

The regularity of the print should not be destroyed by pictures.

The words "Reader" or "Primer" or the number of the book should not appear.

The lines should not be longer than from three to four inches, and it is desirable to have the sentence complete within the line.

The contents of the books should be based on common experiences of strong interest and appeal, and should be well within the grasp of the child.

(1) Investigators, comparing the content of primary readers with those used a few years ago, note that there are realistic stories and informational selections "dealing with the common activities of children and adults, instead of the fanciful folk tales and traditional nursery stories which received great emphasis fifteen years ago. They give the average distribution of space in recent books "from pre-primer to third primer level" as follows:

Literature ........................................ 23%
Nature ........................................... 10%
Community Activities .......................... 18%
People of Other Lands ......................... 3%
Children's Play Activities ..................... 3%
Industry ......................................... 7%
Transportation .................................. 4%
Special Days ..................................... 4%
Communications and Health .................... 1%
Miscellaneous .................................... 9%

(1) Stone attempts to find an index of difficulty by using
(a) a vocabulary analysis - the relation of new words to
total words, e.g. the average repetition.
(b) average number of new words on a page.
(c) percentage of sentences complete in one line. He
shows that the average number of words on a page, because of the
varying proportion of picture space, and consequent alteration in
lengths of line, is not a reliable index of difficulty. However,
both the average repetitions and the percentage of sentences complete
in one line seem to indicate the degree of difficulty. According to
these criteria he analyses half-a-dozen widely used American readers.
A comparison of the one judged by Stone to be the best, with the
reader most widely used in Canterbury schools will be found in
Chapter VI, page 69.

(1) "Measures of Simplicity and Beginning Tests in Reading". Journal
of Educational Research, Feb. 1933.
4. **Reading Readiness.** As long ago as 1925 readiness for reading was listed as one of the five broad stages of development to be considered in the basic reading programs. Since then many investigations have been made in an attempt to find firstly, what factors influence reading readiness and, secondly, the types of experience and training that prepare for reading. It is now generally agreed that successful reading at all levels is determined largely by the physiological, intellectual, emotional and social maturity of the learners, and by proper adaptation of instruction to their needs.

Many of the experiences that prepare the child for reading are acquired in good homes and in kindergartens. The chief purpose of the kindergarten is to adjust the child to an enlarged social environment; reading is rarely part of the school program before the first grade. Unfortunately many pupils enter this grade without having attended kindergarten and having come from poor economic and cultural environments. A good many also suffer from poor health and physical disabilities. The function of the program in the first grade, therefore, is to correct these difficulties, or, if that is not possible, to make adjustments to them, rather than merely wait for time to cure them. Whereas formerly the child was exposed to some sort of instruction in formal reading almost as soon as he arrived at school, now the tendency is to postpone this instruction until the child is ready for it. The factors which contribute to this "reading readiness"

---

(1) "Report of the National Committee on Reading". 24th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education, Part 1, 1925.

(Nota: This is the earliest reference to the concept that was found.)
intellectual, physiological and personal factors, are developed by
means of a carefully planned programme.

(1)

Gray summarises the results of classroom experience and
experimentation, and concludes that at least seven specific types
of attainment are essential to rapid progress in learning to read.
They are as follows:

(i) Wide experience.

(ii) Reasonable facility in the use of ideas.

(iii) Reasonable command of simple English sentences.

(iv) A relatively wide speaking vocabulary.

(v) Accuracy in enunciation and pronunciation.

(vi) Accuracy in visual and auditory discrimination.

(vii) Keen interest in learning to read.

(2)

McKee classifies activities which provide children with
the first of these essential experiences thus:

1. **Constructive Activities**: - making a garden, making
valentines, making a snow man, making a bird bath.

2. **Excursions**: - to the dairy factory, the farm, the
store, the bakery.

3. **Social Activities**: - giving a party, dramatising,
manners.

4. **Other Practical Activities**: - churning butter, making
jelly, setting a hen and watching chicks come out,
becoming acquainted with the school building.

5. Games.

(1) 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education,


(3) Details for developing the remaining six essentials, 36th Year
Optimum Age for Beginning Formal Reading Instruction. Morphett and Washburne appear to have established the idea that a mental age of six to six-and-a-half is that which most nearly assures success. But in interpreting investigations of this kind it is necessary to remember that specific standards for satisfactory progress have been adopted. What is discovered is an optimum age for the particular programme and teacher in question. It seems possible that programmes and methods can be developed on the basis of present knowledge which will make any age from three to eight years appear optimum. What we really need to discover is, "at what time is learning to read educationally and socially most fruitful to the child?" Once this age of optimum utility is determined, the programme best suited to that age will be developed.

To Sum Up: The significant facts which emerge from studies of reading readiness, facts which have become and are still becoming increasingly important for infant teachers in U.S.A., and to a lesser degree, in England, are these:

1. Too early introduction to reading, or the use of over-mature reading material at any stage of progress, promises failure and disappointment to the child who is insufficiently developed mentally, or experientially unprepared.

2. Because children mature at different rates, individual differences must be recognised in initiating the child into reading.


(2) The experimental backing for this idea appears slender, according to investigations made by New Zealand Council for Educational Research (not yet published).


(4) Cf. Rousseau's statement, "It is necessary that a child know how to read when reading is useful to him."
experience that will be vital and significant to him.

3. Methods and techniques of teaching must be adapted to meet the needs of differing personalities.

4. Some means of measuring the stages of development which the child has reached in respect to the factors of reading readiness, must be available to the teacher.

The programme followed by the most progressive infant schools in U.S.A. consists first of all of an extensive examination of all children entering the first grade. During this examination, some appraisal is made of the following:

Intelligence, vision and hearing, any physical and physiological handicaps, speech and motor coordination, visual and auditory perception, understanding and use of English, vocabulary and range of information, background, social adjustment.

The second part of the programme is the provision of a system of classification and teaching methods that permits of considerable flexibility in adjusting to individual differences; the reading readiness or pre-reading programme is skilfully co-ordinated and merged with the initial reading programme.

5. Testing Programme. No account of modern infant room organisation is complete without some mention of the testing programme. Firstly, standardised tests are necessary in order to discover the general intelligence of the child, for it is agreed that intelligence, though not the only factor bearing upon readiness for formal instruction, is certainly important. Secondly, it is necessary to discover whether the child is ready
to begin reading. Tests have been devised and standardised which measure some of the abilities mentioned on page 26 of this chapter.

Third: Tests of attainment are necessary from time to time, in order to see whether the child is "measuring up" to the standard for his age — and also to assess the gain resulting from instruction. These indicate little concerning disabilities and faults, and should not be relied upon for directing instruction.

Fourth: When a child experiences difficulty with reading, and his achievement does not come up to his general ability, some diagnosis should be made in order to devise suitable remedial measures. It is believed by modern educationists that were careful study of the individual made when he enters school, most educational failure would be avoided.

According to the Research Bulletin most successful teachers use not only the tests they prepare themselves, but also at least one other type of test - standardised or semi-standardised. These are given in general two or three times a year. Informal tests, i.e. those constructed by teachers themselves are given about once a week. In about fifty per cent. of cases covered by the investigation, the teachers themselves administered the standardised tests. In about twenty-five per cent. they were administered by principals or superintendents, ten per cent. by supervisors, and occasionally by a special examiner or a psychologist. *Both in terms of*

(2) National Education Association, Bulletin No. 5, 1938.
social productivity and in terms of dollars and cents, a comprehensive plan of individual study is justified."

6. REMEDIAL READING: Until quite recently, it was assumed by teachers that any child who attended school regularly and failed to learn to read, was either stupid or lazy. With the development of standardised tests and more complete understanding both of the individual child and of the learning process, has come the realisation that neither stupidity nor "laziness" can account for the number of children who fail to master the reading process.

Following upon this realisation has come a wealth of study by specialists of the best means of bringing these children up to standard in reading.

Among the notable pioneers in the field of investigation are Marion Monroe, A. I. Gates, E. A. Betts, D. D. Durrell, and others. Reading disabilities have been studied to provide necessary data as to kind, and also degree. Teaching techniques have been devised in order to remedy the disability; and the services of persons specially equipped to give this remedial instruction have been organised. Hand in hand with this development has gone the study of the educational programs, with the aim of preventing the occurrence of reading disabilities. Instead of waiting until the children have actually failed to learn to read, educators are now looking for early indications of difficulties and are changing emphasis from corrective to preventive work in reading. The provision of adequate remedial instruction is properly regarded as only a temporary measure - discovery of the causes of the disability should lead eventually to their removal.

(1) Gates: 36th Year Book, National Society for the Study of Education.
and the consequent absence of reading disability. The most up-to-date elementary schools in America make provision for both the diagnosis and the correction of reading disabilities, which are regarded as a co-operative undertaking by all concerned with the welfare of the learner.

Two investigations carried out by American workers lend point to this discussion.

(1) Boney has shown experimentally that if slow and backward pupils are kept together and instructed at their own levels during the first three grades, a good proportion of the slow readers will be able at the end of Grade III to fit into an average 14th Grade Group.

(2) Betts considers that "by adapting instruction to the needs and interests of the pupils far more rapid progress is made by practically all retarded readers than is usually made by normal pupils under traditional programmes of teaching."

B. ENGLAND.

Probably the best conspectus of the English position with regard to the teaching of reading is contained in the pronouncement of the Consultative Committee. Though published in 1933, and reprinted in 1937, it is probably representative of the best ideals in England. These ideals are the result - not of English experiment and research, but of the investigations of American research workers being considered with regard to English conditions. There are many pioneers among English infant

(1) Elementary School Journal Vol. XXXVII (Nov. 1936, pp. 203-208.)
(3) MacGow Report: "Infant and Nursery Schools".
school teachers, but without the wealth of experimental backing from America, their work would probably be less advanced than it is today. One of the best known of these pioneers is E. Gertrude Hume. Her work is based on the principle enunciated by the Consultative Committee that the curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activities, interests and experiences, and not in terms of subjects. Two of the most fundamental ideas which confront infant teachers are firstly, the recommendation made by the Report that little or no formal work in reading should be given before the age of six, and secondly, the traditional idea that children when promoted to the junior school at about seven-and-a-half, should be reasonably well-equipped with the three R’s. In practice, teachers have found that these two ideas are not incompatible, i.e. the average standard need not be lower, and it may be higher; but there will no longer be a uniform standard. The Report elsewhere says that uniform standards of attainment have no business in the infant school. The aim at the infant level is the satisfaction of the child’s needs at each particular stage as the best preparation for the next stage.

Outdoor excursions, free play, and project work all occupy important places in the day’s activities, and are used as the bases for early reading experience. In general, phonics may be used as a

(1) "The Child under Eight at School" - ed. J. Sergeant; also "Learning and Teaching in the Infants’ School".
(2) "Report on" Infant and Nursery Schools".
(3) Op cit. p.133.
tool, practice being provided in separate lessons. The brighter children learn quickest by the "sentence method, while the duller ones learn most easily by a "direct" method - association of names with objects and pictures; and sentences with some activity. The phonic method is slow and disheartening for such children; and is not recommended with average or less than average children until well on in the infant programme.

A good supply of attractive children's books is available, and "reading corners" are widely used. These succeed in stimulating the child to read.

It is believed that the interests of the child are best served by giving the teacher the same liberty in planning and arranging her work as is claimed for the children in these early years.

English workers in the field of education are very much concerned with the establishment of more favourable environmental conditions in the school, and are also stressing the need for smaller classes, and better equipment. "Despite all these difficulties, however, writes an English teacher, "there are many infant schools doing fine work, and teachers who continue with amazing skill to give all the children in their enormous classes some opportunity for creative work and individual expression, who courageously resist demands for uniformity of standards in reading and arithmetical, who frequently spend their own money on materials that the requisition allowance cannot be made to cover, and their free time helping individual children in difficulties. Many infant schools, even under our present system are very often happy places of true education."

(1) E.C. Harris: "Learning and Teaching in Infant Schools", p.145
(2) D.E.M. Gardner: "The New Era" - "The Needs of the Five to Twelve Year Olds".
CHAPTER IV
READING IN CANTERBURY SCHOOLS

1. HOURS PER WEEK GIVEN TO THE TEACHING OF READING.

Teachers were asked to state the amount of time devoted per week to the teaching of reading. They were asked to include phonics, reading games, spelling, and any other related activities. Perhaps the wording was not as clear as it might have been, and not a great deal of importance need be attached to the answers, but it is interesting to note the variation from teacher to teacher. Table II gives some idea of this.

TABLE II
SHOWING TIME SPENT ON THE TEACHING OF READING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hrs.</th>
<th>hrs.</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Range - 2.5 hours - 9.6 hours (7.1)
Average time - 5.3 hours
Average Time for Country Schools - 5.6 hours
Average Time for Town Schools - 5.0 hours

According to information supplied by the Education Board, the time regarded as satisfactory by the Inspectors is from 5½ hours per week in the first two primers to 7 hours in the third and fourth. Considerably more than half the teachers spent between four and seven
hours per week, less than a tenth spent from two to four hours, and about a quarter spent from seven to ten hours. On the basis of average time per week, there was no appreciable difference between town and country schools. The range between the longest time and the shortest is seven hours, but this probably means that the two teachers concerned included different activities, when giving the total time.

2. PREPARATION FOR FIRST BOOK:

(a) Length of the Period. Teachers were asked to say how long they found this to be. Table III, showing the distribution of the replies is given below. The most significant fact seemed to be that the largest percentage of teachers introduced a book either within the first six weeks, or else not till three months after entry. On the whole, though there were some notable exceptions, teachers using the "Progressive" Series tended to spend a longer period in preparation than teachers using the "Live" Series. However, one teacher spent six months preparing for Book One of the "Live" Series, and one spent only one week preparing the child for Book One of the "Progressive" Series.

**Table III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>0 - 6</th>
<th>6 - 8</th>
<th>8 - 12</th>
<th>Over 12</th>
<th>Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Teachers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Teachers</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Occupations. The following list gives the occupations which were mentioned by two or more teachers as being used to prepare the child for the first book. The frequency with which each was mentioned appears beside each item.

Incidentally, eighteen per cent. of teachers stated that the child was prepared for his first book by reading his first book, i.e. apparatus was prepared in order to familiarise the child with the contents of this book. This percentage is regarded as a conservative estimate - the information was not asked for.

**TABLE IV**

**SHOWING OCCUPATIONS PLANNED AS PREPARATION FOR READING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NO. OF TIMES MENTIONED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Word and phrase matching</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sentence Work</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Drill in sight words</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Talks about Objects or Pictures</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Blackboard Reading</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Related play</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stories and dramatisation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Phonics</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Picture Books</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Nursery rhymes - learning, matching</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Arranging pictures in sequence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Making Books</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Modelling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Projects</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer given</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may be noted that at least nine of the fourteen listed occupations are followed either in the seat or at the blackboard. The project method, which allows for considerable mobility, is last on the list.

3. How teachers judge when child is ready for a book: In general the replies were based on subjective impressions. Only one teacher mentioned the use of readiness tests in this connection. A very large proportion of teachers stated that a child must be able to reach a certain stage determined by teacher-made apparatus—usually flash-cards and matching cards of some kind. There were nine replies of this sort: "Able to recognise most of the words in 'Tiny Tots' (the introductory book). There is no plot or story value in this book, so that the child probably gets no more enjoyment out of reading it that he does out of learning the vocabulary beforehand.

Table V classifies the criteria in certain groups, and shows the emphasis placed upon teacher-made apparatus as a means of judging "readiness".

TABLE V

SHOWING HOW TEACHERS DETERMINE "READINESS" TO READ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>MENTIONED BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Teacher Prepared Apparatus</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Certain Attitudes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Specific Abilities</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Tests - or a Mental Age</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered or answer not clear</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. READING BOOKS:

(a) Initial Book Used. Some teachers begin with the first book of the "Live" series and then change to the "Progressive" series for the second and subsequent books. The reason for this is probably that the first named is based on the phrase and sentence method which is used by a bigger proportion of teachers than other methods. The phonic method is used to a much greater extent in the latter half of the infant period - hence the change-over to the "Progressive" series, which is very largely phonic in character.

Table VI gives the proportion of teachers using the various books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Tiny Tots (Prog)</th>
<th>Prog. 1</th>
<th>Live 1</th>
<th>Beacon 1</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>No Class Book Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Using</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Using</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Class Book. As will be seen from Table VII, the "Progressive" series is the most widely used. A larger percentage uses two or more books than uses the "Live" series alone. The
"Beacon" series is not now obtainable, so only those teachers who have stocks can still use them. Several others stated that they would use them if they were available.

Only two of the fifty teachers replying to this question considered that class books should be abolished. One of these still used such books in the absence of other materials. The second teacher used what she called a "wide-range" reading programme, being fortunate in possessing a very good collection of suitable and attractive books, most of which she had bought herself.

(c) Supplementary Materials. On the whole teachers considered themselves adequately supplied with supplementary reading material, though some said that more books would be used if they were available. In only a few cases was supplementary reading material made by the teachers. The books seen by the writer were generally uninteresting to look at, frequently old and in a poor state of repair, and there was generally a large number of one kind rather than a variety of titles. It appeared that these supplementary books were not much used till Primer 3 or 4 level. Picture books were the only supplementary material available in the earlier stages and these appeared neither plentiful nor attractive. Some teachers remarked upon the difficulty they had in teaching the children to look after books and apparatus.

4. METHODS OF TEACHING.

It was not known before the questionnaires were sent out whether teachers were still following one

(1) There is a prescribed list of text-books issued by the Education Department, and no teacher may ask a child to buy a book not on that list. The Primer Reading Books listed are "Beacon", "Live" and "Progressive."
special method, or whether the so-called traditional methods were so mixed that no particular one was easily distinguishable. From the results, however, it appears that there is some integration of the sentence and the word methods into "Look and Say", which is really the opposite of symbolic methods — the alphabet and the phonics. What also emerges is that the great majority of teachers use two or more methods. None of the teachers who indicated the alphabetic method used it as a means of teaching reading, but only incidentally, in connection with the "Look-and-Say" method. It really amounted to little more than the direct teaching of the letter names.

The percentage of teachers using no phonics at all throughout the entire infant period is very small.

The one teacher who used none of the listed methods was the same who advocated wide range reading and the abolition of the class book. She deprecated the emphasis placed upon phonics in many schools. One teacher justified her early and subsequent use of phonics by saying, "Oh, but the children love them" — indeed a risky basis for deciding what is best for the child.

**TABLE VIII**

**SHOWING THE USE OF A SINGLE METHOD ONLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and Say</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Wide Range&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table IX

**Showing the Use of Several Methods.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>No. of Teachers Using</th>
<th>% of Teachers Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic, Phonic, Look &amp; Say</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic, Phonic</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic, Look &amp; Say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonic, Look &amp; Say</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table X

**Summary of Tables VIII and IX.**

- Total Number Using Single Method = 7 = 14%
- Total Number Using Two Methods = 37 = 74%
- Total Number Using Three Methods = 6 = 12%

### Table XI

**Showing Frequency of Traditional Methods (Singly or in Combination).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method Used Alone or with Others.</th>
<th>No. of Teachers Using</th>
<th>% of Teachers Using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonic</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look and Say</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabetic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The sum of the percentages is not one hundred because most teachers use more than one method (See Table IX).*
5. **OPTIMUM READING AGE.**

(a) *Age.* The largest number of teachers considered that the average child should begin formal reading between the ages of five-and-a-half and six. It was rather surprising that so few, only ten per cent., put it between six and seven. It may be concluded either that teachers have not heard of the new idea of six-and-a-half, or that they do not agree that six-and-a-half is the best age.

**TABLE XII**

**SHOWING OPTIMUM READING AGE.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-5½</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5½-6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6½</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6½-7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) Reading Readiness. Asked if they had heard of "reading readiness", a fairly large number replied in the affirmative. According to Table XIII (b) over half the teachers either gave no opinion or felt they were not able to judge. But Table XIII (a) shows that only twenty-eight per cent. either had not heard of "reading readiness" or did not answer the question. Therefore it must be concluded that quite a number of teachers, though they had heard of "reading readiness", had no opinion to offer. Of those who stated that children were ready to read at five, one added, "especially if the child is encouraged at home", while another said, "Children are too lazy nowadays to make the effort and have to be 'boosted' along". Only two of the teachers stated that modern methods were impracticable owing to pressure of time in the infant room.

TABLE XIII

(a) Showing Familiarity of Teachers with Concept of Reading Readiness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had heard of it</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had not heard of it</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Showing the Opinions of Teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed with desirability of postponing reading</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Able to Judge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. **PLAY.**

(a) **Free.** Early in 1940, Jean Hay, of the Normal School Staff, began an experimental study of the spontaneous play of children. The report was presented to the Infant Study Circle of the New Education Fellowship under Dorothy Baster, also of the Normal School Staff. Great interest was shown by the members of this circle, and several contributions were made by those who had observed this "free play" in English and American infant schools. It was expected, therefore, that some carry-over from this to the schools would be apparent twelve months later.

**Table XIV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of weekly programme</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not part of weekly programme</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading developed from free play</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About half the teachers used this spontaneous play, but only two-thirds of those using it developed reading material from it. Two teachers stated that they were not able to have free-play because of large numbers and lack of floor space.

(b) **Manipulative.** It will be seen from Table XIV that the most frequently provided facilities are those for playing
shops and for gardening; and a certain amount of kindergarten apparatus. These are also the easiest to provide with regard both to cost and to initiative.

**TABLE XV**

**SHOWING FACILITIES FOR MANIPULATIVE PLAY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playing Shops</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Apparatus</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentering Tools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping Pets</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandpits</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Choice Corners</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Play</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. STANDARDESED TESTS.

**TABLE XVI**

**SHOWING THE USE OF STANDARDESED TESTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Test</th>
<th>No. Using</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence - Binet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence - Unnamed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Achievement - curt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement - Unspecified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness - Unspecified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- their own make               | 2         | 4  |

(1) One listed Pintner-Cunningham Intelligence Tests under achievement. This answer has not been included in the table.
As is clear from the above, practically no use is made of standardised tests. The teachers who listed their own "reading readiness" tests obviously misunderstood the question. Two teachers mentioned that problem cases were referred to specialists for testing. One teacher stated that standardised tests were helpful, but there was no time to use them.

3. READING DIFFICULTIES.

It was felt that this section of the questionnaire was rather unsatisfactory in that many teachers did not seem to know what was meant. It was difficult to word the questions in such a way as to avoid suggesting the answers. An analysis of the replies, however, reveals the fact that there are some widely experienced difficulties. The most common one is difficulty in memorising words. According to replies children cannot build up vocabulary because of poor visual memory. This fact was noted in nearly half the replies. More than a third of the teachers thought the main difficulty was in phrasing, and reading with expression. A fifth considered faulty speech habits to be the chief source of trouble in learning to read.

(1) This was my impression as I visited the schools.
TABLE XVII

SHOWING MAIN READING DIFFICULTIES NOTED BY TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>No. of Times Recorded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor visual memory</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrasing and reading with expression</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics blending</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversals and confusions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by heart</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faulty eye movements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No encouragement at home</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One infant mistress went so far as to say that she had no reading difficulties except in connection with children who came from other schools. Seven teachers out of fifty gave no answer to this question.

When Difficulties Appear. From Table XVIII it seems that most of the teachers found reading difficulties from the beginning, or from the time when the reading book was introduced. This would seem to show that there is some need for a closer study of the pre-reading stages.
TABLE XVIII

SHOWING WHEN TEACHING DIFFICULTIES APPEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the earliest stages.</th>
<th>When sentences are begun.</th>
<th>When book is begun.</th>
<th>When phonetics are begun</th>
<th>When teachers have not enough time for testing.</th>
<th>When formal reading begins too early.</th>
<th>Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other times - 10%

Methods of Overcoming Difficulties. A fifth of the teachers gave no information under this heading. The policy most generally followed by teachers is to treat by means of drill, any difficulties that appear. For instance, when the child has difficulty with phonetic blending, he is given plenty of practice in that. When he is poor at remembering words, he is drilled by means of word lists, flash cards, and matching cards, and not infrequently writes the word, draws the picture, and even models the word. Twenty per cent. consider speech a difficulty, yet only ten per cent. advocate speech training as a means of getting rid of reading difficulties. It is fairly significant that only four per cent. mentioned some form of individual work in overcoming reading difficulties - and that no mention whatever is made of diagnostic tests. It would seem that these methods are the result of an analysis of the particular difficulty, but not of the total situation.

9. RETARDATION.

Under this heading, teachers were asked what constituted retardation in the infant room. Most of the answers revealed the
fact that judgments were largely subjective, while a few mentioned specific achievements which they expected of the child. Several referred to the Departmental classification, viz. "that a child who had spent more than two years in the infant room was retarded, and must have an explanation appended to his name on the list." There was a good deal of very loose thinking, and confusion of mental retardation and scholastic disability, e.g. a child was regarded as backward if not up to the standard of children of his age, provided his attendance was regular.

**TABLE XIX**

**SHOWING WHAT CONSTITUTES RETARDATION IN THE INFANT ROOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
<th>% of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to read a specified book</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 years in infant room</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 years in infant room</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous subjective criteria</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XIX shows the need for some standardised means of determining retardation.

It will be noted that twenty per cent. of teachers use for

---

(1) The Senior Inspector stated that this no longer exists. Children are promoted when ready. See Table XIX for number of teachers still using this as a criterion.

(2) This book ranged from Book 3 to Book 5 of the "Live" series.

(3) A standard no longer officially recognised, see Note (1) above.
determining retardation a standard that is no longer officially recognised, viz., more than two, or more than three, years in the infant room. Below is a list of some of the highly subjective standards that were given:

A child is retarded who is:

1. Unable to obey ordinary commands. (1)
2. Unable to apply phonics. (2)
3. Unable to write sentences suitable to his mental age. (3)
4. Deficient in visual memory. (4)

10. PROMOTION TO STANDARD 1.

Teachers were asked what criteria were used to decide upon promotions to Standard 1. About three-quarters used an objective standard - ability to read a certain book. But as will be seen from the table, not all were agreed upon which book should be the basic requirement. About one-fifth gave a purely subjective standard, while a tenth did not answer the question. Some teachers listed a book and other criteria. Eighteen per cent. demanded some standard in arithmetic, besides the reading prescriptions.

(1) He might be deaf, or highly defective.
(2) It is generally agreed that phonic blending requires a Mental Age of 7.
(3) No recognised method of finding the mental age was used in the school concerned.
(4) This is a case of specific disability.
TABLE XX
SHOWING REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION TO STANDARD I.

(a) Objective Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Book</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Book</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Book</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Journal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al(2) Pt.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Summary of Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of teachers giving book as standard</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of teachers giving other criteria</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A mental or reading age was mentioned by 13 teachers, but a comparison of this with Table XVI, on page 43, showing the use of standardised tests, will explain the importance that is attached to this group. Six of those mentioned either a mental or a reading age, used no standardised tests at all according to their replies.

In addition to the above requirements some teachers gave others - of which a few appear below.

(i) "Children should be able to read and understand any story book for seven to eight years."

(ii) "The child must be able to read easy supplementary readers."

(iii) "No definite tests are given. The infant mistress selects the children from her own knowledge of their capacities."

(1) Where some teachers listed alternative books, both have been included in this table.

(2) Most teachers mentioned easy stories from the School Journal, but one teacher mentioned that the child should be able to read it three months before promotion.
TABLE XXI
SHOWING OPINION ON INCLUSION OF STD. I IN INFANT CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO. OF TEACHERS</th>
<th>% OF TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In favour</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in favour</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eight per cent. of those in favour of the inclusion of Std. I in the infant classification added conditions as to staffing of the infant school, and selection of children. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers do seem to be in favour of such a step being taken.

12. SEX DIFFERENCES.

Teachers were asked whether they noticed any sex differences, in respect to reading at the infant level.

Nobody thought boys were superior to girls.
38% thought girls superior to boys.
50% had noticed no difference.
12% gave no answer.

It would seem that though half the teachers concerned had noticed no difference between boys and girls in respect to reading, most of the remainder considered girls to be superior in the early stages. One teacher commented on the fact that her most backward group consisted almost entirely of boys. From investigations carried out in the United States, it appears that boys are probably ready to read later than girls of the same age, and, moreover, have interests which are not satisfied with the commonly used preparatory material.
CHAPTER V

CONSIDERATIONS OTHER THAN TEACHING METHODS

(1) ORGANISATION:

Having found in the main how reading is taught in the schools, it will now be necessary to examine some of the more important factors that influence teachers in their work. The first of these is the framework of the education system. Although patterned on the English system, it is more highly centralised. Prior to the abolition of the Proficiency Examination there was a good deal of uniformity, which discouraged experimentation. Furthermore, infant classes are not organised as separate schools, being frequently housed in the same building. For purposes of grading they are inspected by the primary inspectors.

(2) SCHOOL ENTRANCE AGE.

Children in New Zealand schools may enter at five years. From 1932 to 1935 inclusive, the age of entry was raised to six. From the figures in Table XXII some idea may be gained of the proportion of children in infant classes who have had kindergarten training. It may be estimated very roughly at one in sixteen. Important differences may be noted in this connection between conditions obtaining in New Zealand and those in the U.S.A. First, the usual entrance age in U.S.A. is six. Second, a larger proportion, about one child in ten, has had kindergarten experience.
TABLE XXII
SHOWING ROLL NUMBERS IN KINDERGARTEN & INFANT CLASSES RESPECTIVELY
(1939 Returns).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of Children having kindergarten training 1:16 (approx)

No accurate results can be obtained, because the infant roll numbers are spread over two years or more. Also some children stay longer than a year in kindergartens.

A larger proportion of the infant school population in U.S.A. has had previous kindergarten training.

3. PROMOTION TO STANDARD I.

A further circumstance which must be borne in mind by anyone studying the conditions under which infant teachers work is the fact of promotion to Standard I. Until a few years ago, a child was considered retarded who spent more than two years in the infant room, and many children were promoted who, though they had reached the age at which promotion usually took place, were not up to standard in scholastic achievement. Although this is no longer in force, infant teachers still have to promote into Standard I as many children as possible in order not to be overcrowded by new entrants. Hence, there is still as much reason as ever to "push" children, which in its turn means beginning formal instruction as early as possible. Also in connection with Promotion, infant teachers tend to be dominated by the requirements of Standard I teachers, who stress the need

(1) The basis of calculation is a doubling of kindergarten numbers in relation to the others.
for children coming from the infant room to be able to read the
School Journal, and to do quite advanced work in written expression.
As was stated in Chapter IV, a good many infant teachers consider
that the inclusion of Standard I in the infant classification would
enable the slow learning child to progress at his own rate, e.g.
practice at Phillipstown. Std. I.

(4) ATTITUDE OF PARENTS.

The attitude of parents towards a child's school activities
is difficult to assess. A few teachers in their replies, thought
that parents expected the child to begin reading as soon as he went
to school, while others stated that parents expressed no such ideas.
One teacher pointed out that so long as class-books were used, parents
did have a sense of inferiority when they found that a neighbour's
child was reading Book Four and their child had only Book Two. It
is possible, with the strengthening of parent-teacher-child relation-
ships, to acquaint parents with the general scheme of infant room
work, and to seek their co-operation in pursuing whatever policy
is to the advantage of the child. It may be relevant to cite, in
this connection, a plan that is adopted in certain American schools
viz., the sending of a letter to the parents acquainting them with
the procedures to be followed in the case of their particular child,
and inviting the parents to come to the school to discuss the child

(1) See Chapter IV, p. 49.
(2) Evidence of this was seen by the writer when visiting city schools.
(3) Page 50.
(4) Phillipstown Infant School runs a parallel Standard 1 within the
infant school for slow learners. The results at the end of the
year seem to justify this.
(5) See Appendix for copy of letter.
with the teacher. In New Zealand, teachers are probably more concerned with overcoming the apathy of parents than in dealing with their interfering ways. The organisation of some schools in America makes it possible for parents to interfere far more than is desirable in the best interests of teacher and child.

5. LITERATURE AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS.

In addition to the libraries which teachers collect for themselves, there are three main sources from which reading material may be obtained. There is, firstly the Teachers' Library which is housed in the Education Board Office. A catalogue of books is sent to each school, and is regarded as "one of the permanent records of the school."

A list of those books belonging to this library which deal with any aspect of infant work appears below. None of the books is published later than 1929. List B contains books, also dealing with some aspect of infant work, which appear in the proposed list of purchases for 1941. Only one of these, which is an excellent book on the subject and probably the latest to reach New Zealand contains much up-to-date material on reading at the infant stage.

**LIST A. BOOKS ON INFANT METHODS IN TEACHERS' LIBRARY, EDUCATION BOARD.**

Bone, W.A. "Individual Occupations in the Three R's". (no date).
Bryant, E.C. "How to Tell Stories to Children". (no date).
Clark, E. "More Stories and How to Tell Them." (no date; two copies).

---

(1) Harris, A.J.: "How to Increase Reading Ability."
LIST A. (con)

Drummond, M. "Psychology and Teaching of Number." (1926).


Grassem & Morsa. "Constructive Hints on Earliest Stages of Teaching Reading." (no date)


Pybus, D. "Forty Five Easy Games." (1928)

Sykes, G. "Individual and Group Arithmetic." (no date).

Whitcombe & Tombs. "Teaching Key to Live Readers." (no date).


Practical Infant Teacher Books. 1 - 5. (1929).

LIST B. PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE TEACHERS' LIBRARY - BOOKS ON INFANT METHODS.

Gull, H. "Project Teaching."

Harris, A.J. "How to Increase Reading Ability." (1940).

Hughes & Hughes. "Learning and Teaching."

Year Book of Education.

LIST C. BOOKS ON INFANT METHODS IN THE NEW EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP SECTION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.


LIST D.    BOOKS ON INFANT METHODS IN THE REFERENCE SECTION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

(1)    Harrison, M. Lucille    "Reading Readiness." (1936).

Year Book of Education (up to date).

The second source is the Public Library, in which the Reference Section, and the New Education Fellowship Section both have books on various aspects of education. Any person who is a member of the New Education Fellowship is entitled, on presentation of membership card, to borrow books from the New Education Fellowship Section. Anybody at all may have access to the Reference Library, but only members of the Lending Library may borrow the books. Those books concerned partly or wholly with infant work are contained in Lists C. and D.

The third source is the Training College Library. No publications on up-to-date infant teaching are to be found there at all.

The University Library is open to students taking lectures and to graduates (these are required to pay an annual subscription of ten shillings). Certain other people engaged in some particular research and approved by the Rector and the Librarian may borrow books.

(1) & (2) These two books were ordered for the Canterbury College Library but were sent by mistake to the Public Library, where they were catalogued and stamped before the mistake was discovered.
6. **SOURCE OF NEW IDEAS.**

In a general note at the end of the questionnaire, it was suggested that teachers should state the sources from which they obtained new ideas. From the meagre nature of the information received it would seem either that this suggestion was not noticed or that teachers had few such ideas.

**TABLE XXIII.**

**SHOWING SOURCE OF NEW IDEAS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Mentioned by</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Books, N.S.S.E. 24th, 36th. (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Bulletin, N.E.A. No. 5. (3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play in the Infant School.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Education Fellowship Library</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Teachers' Study Circle (4)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information given</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Several teachers mentioned more than one of the above as sources of new ideas.

There is no means, except by further contact with the teachers of finding out the number who take "Child Education", but it would

---

(1) National Society for the Study of Education.
(2) National Education Association.
(3) E. R. Boyce.
(4) R. Turner and T. B. J. Donnelly.
be expected that more than the fourteen per cent. who mentioned it, do so. It is surprising that not more than ten per cent. mentioned the Infant Teachers' Study Circle, but this may be accounted for, firstly, by the fact that only about thirty per cent. of the schools that replied are within a reasonable distance of the city; and secondly, as was explained earlier, several schools were without infant mistresses at the time the questionnaire was sent out. The numbers referring to the other sources listed are negligible. Perhaps a better response might have been made if the probable sources had been listed and teachers had been asked to tick those that they used. On the whole this procedure was avoided, in order not to suggest the answers.

It is not surprising, on the other hand, that no reference was made to the Education Board and the Training College libraries. So far as the Canterbury College Library is concerned, those who use it are not infant mistresses, but students in training, young teachers completing their University Degrees - or graduates, mostly in secondary schools.

Spread of New Ideas. Mention was made in several replies that there was very little spreading of new ideas by teachers fresh from Training College. A possible explanation may be that infant mistresses do not always welcome new ideas offered by enthusiastic young teachers. Also, it is a good many years before these young teachers are in a position to try out their own ideas, by which time their youthful enthusiasm has often been damped, if not destroyed.

(1) Chapter I, page 6.
by large classes and superiors who are not sympathetic with new ideas.

Some teachers thought there should be regular conferences, at which ideas were pooled, difficulties were discussed, and experiments reported and evaluated.

7. TEACHER TRAINING.

So far as teacher training is concerned, it would seem that insufficient time is given to the study of infant work. A very large proportion of young teachers go into infant and lower primary work from College, and consequently the teachers need a more comprehensive preparation for such work. Again third year studentships are available in such branches of teaching as Experimental Education, Art, Music, Physical Education, Speech, and others. In none of these does the student specialise in infant work, which few will deny, needs both special gifts and special preparation. Third-year studentships in Infant Method might prove to be worth while.

8. INSPECTORS' REPORTS.

An examination of reports by the Senior Inspector of the (1) Canterbury Board shows that no reference has been made to new development in reading, except in 1933 when the sentence method was commented upon thus: "In primer classes the introduction of the sentence and other methods based upon thought has opened up avenues for experiment by many of our more progressive teachers. The older idea, that children must say words first before they can

(1) The earliest examined was 1920.
understand them, is being questioned, and considerable success has been obtained by training infants to see a phrase or sentence before attempting it in speech." As far back as 1922, reference is made to progress through the school at varying rates according to individual capacity. The report continues, "It is to be hoped that teachers will find it practicable to advance promising pupils at other times than at the end of the year and thus do justice to the varying mental powers of the pupils under their charge." (1) Except in the infant room, children are still promoted at the rate of a standard a year. (2)

Reports of the Chief Inspector for New Zealand were examined. The only significant reference to work in infant classes appeared in 1939, on the subject of readiness for formal instruction in reading and number. Some results of overseas research were referred to, and the statement continued thus: "Postponement (of early formal training) until the pupil reaches a stage of readiness results in rapid progress unaccompanied by emotional upsets or loss of confidence due to difficulties too great for the immature mind, and in the development of a correct attitude towards subjects. This interesting theory is being tested in some New Zealand schools, and the progress of the experiment will be followed with close attention." (3)

(2) E.E. (1929-1939). For full title see Bibliography, p. i.
(3) So far the writer has been unable to discover where these experiments are taking place.
9. ADVISER TO INFANT AND KINDERGARTEN DEPARTMENTS.

The year 1938 marked a new development in the organisation of infant teaching in New Zealand. The Government appointed three advisers to Infant and Kindergarten Departments - two in the North Island and one in the South. These advisers visit as many schools as possible during the year, and hold refresher courses from time to time. They are conversant with the newest overseas developments in infant methods and by means of personal interviews, refresher courses, and cyclostyled material are seeking to improve the standard of infant teaching throughout their districts. It was the privilege of the writer to spend some time with the South Island adviser, from whom it was possible to discover the ideas and suggestions that were constantly being put before infant mistresses. From a comparison of these with the replies received, it would seem that there is a lack of application of new ideas to the organisation and practical teaching in the infant schools. It may be that infant mistresses are loth to depart from the habits of a lifetime and make the rather sharp break necessary for the adoption of up-to-date methods. A completely new orientation is demanded.

10. A NOTE ON THE SYLLABUS.

This is the 1929 revision of the then existing syllabus, and was introduced into schools in 1930. Inspectors commented at the time upon the fact that many teachers seemed unwilling to follow the new syllabus but preferred to do things
Mainly as a result of the New Education Fellowship Conference, teachers have paid less attention to the syllabus since 1938, and though nothing has yet been issued to take its place, it is generally regarded as rather out of date. Nevertheless, it is understood that teachers cannot be asked to do anything that is not in the syllabus, unless they wish, and inspectors, if they so desire, may expect teachers to do what the syllabus prescribes. So far as prescriptions in infant work are concerned, the following quotations will explain, in part at any rate, the over-emphasis of phonics and the early beginnings with formal instruction.

"By the time the pupil has acquired......a knowledge of a few names and sentences - that is, after the first school term - he is ready for the examination of sounds......The more skilful he becomes in utilising phonics in interpreting words and sentences in the reading material before him, the more rapidly will he become independent of the teacher's aid."

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(2) This was the considered opinion of an experienced teacher, but has not been verified.
(3) "Syllabus of Instruction", New Zealand Education Department, 1930, p. 75.
CHAPTER VI
SOME COMPARISONS

1. INTRODUCTION.

American literature on the topic of reading has attained prodigious proportions over the last forty years. In the compilation of the Research Bulletin a survey of this literature was made, and a total of 1356 books and articles related to reading instruction was reviewed. Of these, all but twenty-three were published between 1900 and 1935, and a table of distribution in five-year periods shows a tremendous increase since 1921.

| TABLE XXIV |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHOWING OUTPUT OF PUBLICATIONS ON READING INSTRUCTION IN UNITED STATES.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901 - 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906 - 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911 - 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 - 1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 - 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 - 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931 - 1935 (incomplete for 1935)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are perhaps two main contributing factors to this rather sudden and pronounced concern with reading. Firstly, America was

(2) In 1933, this number had increased to more than 1500.
faced with a "polyglot" population and the problem of educating the people to become good Americans was bound to be absorbing. And secondly, great concern was manifested in the number of children who failed promotion. It soon became evident that the chief cause of failure was inability to read. From this point the subject was taken up by many people—psychologists mostly, but not entirely—until at the present time there is such an output from America, of articles, bulletins and other publications that it is virtually impossible to keep up with them all.

While no such rapid developments are to be noted in England, there is, nevertheless, an awareness that all is not well. Concern is being felt at the incidence of reading disability, and some attention is being paid to the findings of American research. In New Zealand the position is much the same, though as yet very few practical changes have taken place as a result of the influence of American literature. Conditions in educational circles in the two British countries differ from those in America, where there is a much more dynamic interest in educational problems, and a more lively concern with planning and carrying out experiments.

2. METHODS.

The basic principle in teaching is a proper conception of the importance of the individual, and while it is desirable to adopt this principle throughout the educative process, it is nowhere more important to do so than at the infant stages. The child is entering a new and strange environment, to which considerable adjustment must be made, and his ability to make this adjustment satisfactorily will depend firstly upon what he has brought with him from his earlier training and
experience, and secondly, upon what the school has to offer as supplementary to this.

Modern progressive schools try to make the environment approximate as nearly as possible to that of the good average home. It is informal, natural and easy. Suitable furniture, bright attractive pictures, children's toys, books, paste, paper and scissors, and all the hundred and one other things that belong especially to the realm of childhood are part of this environment.

How many New Zealand schools provide such an easy transition for the child? From the information available it would seem that very little activity is possible in Canterbury infant rooms - play facilities are few, pre-occupation with formal seat work excessive, and scope for the development of individuality and co-operation limited. The average child is five when he enters school, and by common consent is less ready for strictly formal work than the average six-year-old. And yet, well before he reaches the age of six, he is faced with the task of reading his first "book". Not only that, but he has had a fairly formal preparation for this "priceless treasure", and may even have read it - without knowing. The sort of life he has led since entering school results to a great extent in the disappearance of his childish enthusiasm and individuality.

Examples of the natural, easy, informal type of modern infant rooms are described in the work of Hume, in the "Teachers' College Record", and elsewhere. In the first work cited, is a picture in which

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(1) Majority between five-and-a-half and six. See Chapter IV, pp.33,40.
(2) 15% stated this in other words. See Chapter IV, p.34
(3) "Reading, Learning and Teaching in the Infants' School".
(4) "Reading Readiness in a Progressive School." F.T. Wilson and Agnes Burks. Teachers' College Record, April 1937.
children are engaged in "free activity" - some at tables, some on mats on the floor, some at blackboards. There is plenty of floor space, and the room appears light and sunny. Moreover, the teacher is not in the picture.

The second reference is to an account by Agnes Burke of the way in which she "teaches" reading, at the pre-primer stage and later when the children have books. Throughout, the atmosphere is bright and informal, and the children are on tiptoe with enthusiasm. Such conditions as here described make schools happier and more natural places of learning than many that are to be found throughout Canterbury.

(1)

It has been shown earlier in this thesis, that teachers in Canterbury schools make little or no use of readiness tests, except those devised by themselves. It would seem that children as they enter the infant classes, are subjected to certain kinds of reading programmes regardless of their chances of success. Teachers are aware that some children read at five and some not till they are six or seven, or more. Under existing conditions it is not possible for these slow learners to be identified until inability to cope with the regular prescriptions causes them to fall behind their classmates. Apparently when this happens, the children are put into groups as "repeaters", and find themselves doing the same work over again with younger children.

Some reliable method of classifying new entrants on the basis of various abilities, should be adopted here, as it is in

(1) Chapter IV, p. 43
all schools claiming to be modern. Nor is this enough. The teaching programme should be modified in such a way as to cater for the differing needs, interests and abilities of the children so classified. How otherwise can anything more than lip service be paid to the psychology of individual differences? It is generally agreed that children should develop a technique to assist them in the recognition of new words, but it is also agreed that this technique is only a tool—a means to an end, and never an end in itself. Neither is it a substitute for thought-getting.

The use of a method predominantly phonic imposes limitations upon the material that is presented to the child and results in such distortions of the language as "May I play train?" said Pat. "Go and play horse," said mother.

It is clear from the evidence cited in Chapter III that the so-called "phonics" method as such should not occupy the very prominent place it does in the teaching of reading in the group of schools studied. Many methods in modern progressive schools do not include "phonics" at all. The bases of these methods are the children's interests and experiences, developed through activities of some sort—play or project work. An example of this may be given from an account of reading in a "Progressive School" where no formal drill in reading or letters was provided.

(1) It is not suggested that the use of more and different tests would necessarily enable this classification to be done, but rather that without some sort of objective measurement, teachers cannot classify reliably, nor adopt preventive measures, instead of corrective.

(2) "Tiny Tots Primer"; Whitcombe's Progressive Series. For other equally illustrative examples, see "Progressive Phonic Primer," Book 2. (Whitcombe & Tombs).

but where much functional learning took place. As far as can be ascertained this procedure is followed in only one of the schools participating in this survey. The methods in this school are "wide-range", and the infant mistress is keenly interested in overseas developments in the teaching of reading. There is otherwise a slavish pre-occupation with the mechanics of reading, and little more than lip service is paid to a consideration of the interests and needs of the children. While it is most desirable that teachers be free to develop and follow their own methods, it is also not only desirable, but essential, that they be ready to modify these methods to meet the demands of a particular child at a particular stage.

3. READING BOOKS.

A comparison of New Zealand reading books with any American ones that have found their way to this country leaves no doubt as to the unsuitability of those used in our own schools, and the great advantages to be gained either by importing some of the American productions or having similar books made in New Zealand. Those used here are poor in literary style, in illustration, in arrangement and in interest value. Plot is sacrificed to the repetition of words and the requirements of "phonics", and the vocabulary burden is excessive. (1) Considered in the light of the evidence cited in Chapter III, the New Zealand books are inconceivably bad. Their price is their only virtue.

(1) See "Progressive" Series, Book 2: Nursery Rhymes, presumably well known to children are followed by a garbled prose version that would amoy any intelligent adult. See pp.40-48 for one of the worst examples.

(2) Chapter III, p.21.
### Table XXV
Comparison of Two Reading Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series of Readers - Pre-Primer and Primer.</th>
<th>No. of different words in first 250 words.</th>
<th>Average No. of repetitions in first 250 words.</th>
<th>Average No. of new words per page.</th>
<th>Per Cent. of one-line sentences in first 250 words.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Progressive, &quot;Tiny Tots&quot; (New Zealand)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Webster (U.S.A.)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the reader considered by Stone (Series "A") to be the best with the "Progressive" (Series "B") it will be seen that in Series "A", almost twice as many new words are introduced as in Series "B", and that the number of repetitions is only a little more than half that of Series "B". The average number of new words on a page depends upon the size of the print, and the number of pictures which break into the reading, so it is not a very satisfactory criterion. So far as the percentage of one-line sentences is concerned, Series "B" has the larger. It may be noted in passing that Series "A" contains many so-called sentences that are very poor English. For example, on page 11 of the "Tiny Tots" Primer appears this: "I see May and Pat go." On page 12 is this: "Play the game traine." So that although about three-quarters of the sentences in this series are complete in one line, they do not, as sentences, possess much

(1) Chapter III, p. 22.
value. So far as the number of new words and the number of repetitions are concerned, the American series appears superior. In the "Progressive" series there is no plot, nor has the material any story value. Therefore further repetitions would be impossible. It is obvious that the "Progressive" Series falls far behind the best American productions.

4. READING READINESS AND PRE-READING STAGE.

Although over seventy per cent. of the Canterbury teachers said they had heard of "reading readiness", fifty per cent. failed to say whether or not they agreed with the findings of American research workers, and over 60 per cent. thought the optimum age for beginning formal instruction was between five-and-a-half and six. The list of occupations calculated to prepare the child for formal reading suggests that it might well have the opposite effect, and give him a thorough distaste for the subject. (1)

In a research rather similar to this study, the most widely used type of preparation is "providing various experiences as a basis for stories e.g. trips and excursions, interesting toys, pets, parties, and activity projects of various types." Canterbury teachers placed projects last on the list. The first mention of any seat work in the American replies is fifth on the list — "matching words with pictures and objects." The first three on the Canterbury list are probably seat work — or blackboard work, but certainly not activity. "Phonics" appear eighth on the Canterbury list.

(1) C.f. Table IV, Chapter IV, p.34
but not at all on the American. Making books is very near the end (1) of the Canterbury list, but ranks tenth on the American.

It was stated by a few Canterbury teachers that it seemed a waste of time to wait till the child was ready. One even remarked on the "laziness" of children nowadays. This is indeed evidence that enlightenment is badly needed by some members of the teaching profession. If teachers holding opinions such as the one quoted above, could see the results of this "boosting along" that is done in the name of education, they would not be so complacent about their treatment of the child who is not "ready to read." Untold harm has been done by forcing the child to respect the tasks at which he has failed. It is similar to asking a child to repeat algebra because he does not understand the division of whole numbers. In the past teachers have been too much inclined to put the blame of the child's failure upon the child and his "laziness", whereas more properly it belonged to the teacher and his failure to appreciate the problem.

From a study of recent trends in overseas publications, it looks as though this concept of "reading readiness" will, when thoroughly grasped by teachers, have a revolutionary effect upon the teaching of reading - indeed, upon the whole organisation in the infant room. But it is quite obvious from the replies that even those who said they agreed with modern trends are not at present doing very much about revising their ideas. As for the number who had not heard of the concept, or had no opinions, re-education will be

(1) From what I saw of these in schools, with one exception, they are not developed from the child's own conversation, but are simply adaptations of primer books - words and illustrations or squares of coloured paper with names of colours beside them.

(2) Quoted Chapter IV, p. 41.
necessary. When it is considered that children enter New Zealand schools at five, and are probably not ready to begin reading for at least a year, it is only too obvious that some help will be needed by teachers who say "But what are we to do with the child when he comes to school if we are not to teach him formal reading?" The most pressing needs at the present time in Canterbury schools are the provision of a suitable environment and the use of progressive methods for the education of the five-year-olds. The re-education of infant teachers will be a most necessary part of this provision. They could learn a good deal from the activities of the Free Kindergarten in this connection. An extension of their methods to the five-year-olds appears to be the best answer to the teachers who ask, "What are we to do with the five-year-olds?"

It is interesting to note that H.R. McKenzie said, as long ago as 1929 or 1930, "Our investigations tend to show the futility of beginning formal instruction at too early an age..... There is ample corroboration. The records of the Toronto Board of Education provide incontrovertible evidence of the folly of beginning formal instruction before children are six years old." He goes on to say that we are probably wasting time, energy and money in attempting to instruct children who are not yet ready for formal instruction and who may actually be injured by our efforts. He cites further

(1) (a) This would have to be established by experience based on New Zealand conditions; (b) the average child is considered. Above average children would probably be ready at five.

(2) "School Surveys", Taranki Education District, 1927 and 1929, p. 59

(3) Op cit. p. 69.

(4) Op cit. p. 69.
evidence in support of this view, and concludes thus: "How can we continue to justify our practice of subjecting infants to formal instruction which is of no real use to them?..... There is urgent need for the scientific measurement of the development of children below Standard 3. So far little or nothing has been officially attempted in this direction."

5. THE TESTING PROGRAMME.

It is clear that teachers of infant classes in Canterbury schools use no standardised tests. While no competent person believes that testing is a substitute for teaching, most agree that it is a necessary part of teaching, and not a waste of valuable time. One example, from the writer's own experience may serve to illustrate the benefit that might have been derived had the teachers concerned been able to use intelligence tests. The case was a boy, almost nine years old, who was in Standard I, but not able to read even a Primer Two Book. He had been put into Standard I because he was a "big fellow". The teachers thought he could not be very bright, but "they were not sure." Intelligence tests revealed the fact that his mental age was just over six. The boy had been taken individually by a number of people from time to time, but it was quite obvious from the tests that mentally he was only then ready to begin formal reading, and that, on account of his low I.Q., his rate of progress would be slower than average. Much time had been wasted, and some unpleasantness had been suffered

(1) It may be stated here that at present there are very few tests suitable for these age levels that are available to the teachers. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research is busy on the preparation of reading readiness tests.
by the boy, which would never have been the case had the probable level of intelligence been known in advance.

Not much attention can be paid to the idea of individual differences, if teachers rely on experience to find these out. It will not be denied that many teachers can "sum up" their pupils fairly well, but only after teaching them for some time. Is it not much more economical for the teacher and much safer for the child to make in advance tentative judgments on the basis of any tests available of the child's abilities and probable chances of success?

In the matter of reading difficulties, no teachers mentioned the use of tests to discover the nature and possible causes of individual difficulties, though one or two stated that problem cases were referred to specialists. While most secondary schools try to classify their entrants according to abilities and interests, and for this purpose use, among other things, intelligence tests, the primary schools, and particularly the infant schools, attempt no such standardised procedure. From (1) the research quoted in Chapter III it would appear that about fifty per cent. of teachers in U.S.A. administer their own intelligence tests. New Zealand teachers, unless they have taken a course including Experimental Education at the University have received no training in the use of standardised tests. A considerable amount of prejudice exists among teachers against the use of such tests, but it is probably because they are familiar neither with their limitations nor with their advantages.

6. **STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT.**

It is generally agreed that uniform standards of attainment are out of place in the infant room. However, there will be certain basic requirements for promotion, which are to be determined from a study of the child in relation to the programme which he will have to handle on promotion. Too often such requirements are laid down on a more or less arbitrary basis either by the head teacher, or by the teacher of the class to which promotion is to be made. The position in Canterbury Schools, as revealed earlier in this thesis is a most unsatisfactory one. There is no evidence to show who imposes the standard, except where it is stated that "the infant mistress herself promotes on the basis of her knowledge of the child." Unsatisfactory though this is, it cannot be more so than the adoption of some arbitrary basis such as ability to read a particular book, or to work certain arithmetical combinations. It is beyond comprehension that some teachers suggested a certain reading age or a certain mental age as the requirement for promotion, while, according to their replies they used no recognised means of determining these ages. There is an urgent need for administrators, teachers and parents to understand the child as an integrated personality, to be dealt with in terms of his own capacities for achievement, rather than in terms of adult standards.

7. **REMEDIAL READING.**

One of the most noticeable developments in the field of reading, both in America and, to a lesser extent, in England, is

(1) Chapter IV, pp. 48, 49.
the provision of facilities for the diagnosis and correction of reading difficulties. So far, in New Zealand, very little, if any attempt is being made by the schools to discover and treat their reading cases. There is one class in Canterbury, at the Normal School, for children suffering from such disability, but on account of necessary limitations, it is able to deal with only a very small number of the cases reported. The Child Guidance Clinic at Canterbury University College has facilities for diagnosing cases, but not for giving remedial treatment, except one or two children at a time. Advice is available at this clinic to teachers who have the time and the enthusiasm to attempt some remedial treatment, but this advice is very seldom sought. Teachers in their training are given no preparation for remedial work, and as was shown, they rely on very haphazard methods both for the detection and the correction of the difficulties they meet. There is considerable scope for the development of this work either in schools, or by special educational psychologists. When each teacher realises that the world places a premium on variations in individual interests, aptitudes, and general capacities for achievement, and accordingly, differentiates instruction within the classroom, so that maximum development may occur, the need for remedial workers will have disappeared. Until then, the need is urgent.

(1) Chapter IV, pp. 44–46.
(2) M. Lusty - "Specific Retardation, etc." p. 148
The conditions under which reading is taught in infant classes in Canterbury schools have been compared with what are judged to be the best methods practised in England and in the United States. It is not improbable that while the best overseas practices are ahead of our own, the average practice in New Zealand compares more than favourably with that of England and the United States. It is desirable, nevertheless, to compare the usual practices here with the best overseas, as a possible means of preparing for and inducing improvements in our own schools.

1. CONCLUSIONS.

(i). Classes of beginners are much too large. If teachers are required to cope with forty-five and fifty children, they cannot pay very much attention to methods which demand considerable individualisation.

(ii). There is no regular procedure for studying each new entrant in order to discover his readiness for a particular programme.

(iii). Formal work in reading is begun too early in many cases.

(iv). Methods of teaching reading are not carefully adapted to individual needs and capacities.

(v). Means of assessing objectively the reading difficulties of the child at the infant level are not available to teachers.

(vi). There is a shortage of suitable reading material,
and the importance of the "class" reading book is exaggerated.

(vii) Teachers tend to concentrate upon reading as a subject to be taught, rather than upon initiating the child, as a person, into a new skill.

(viii) There is no system to enable teachers of outstanding ability to attend further courses and to receive special recognition by endorsement of certificates, or otherwise.

(ix) There is a comparative absence of reference material available to teachers. They do not buy books of this kind, and many teachers are unaware of the existence of such books.

There are, however, several recent developments which afford substantial hope of improvement.

First, the additional appointments to the Inspectorate should enable inspectors with special knowledge of the subject, to offer helpful advice and encourage and plan experiments in the Infant Department.

Second, the recently appointed adviser to Infant and Kindergarten Departments, by means of refresher courses, visits to schools and discussion circles, is able to bring before teachers the most recent trends in infant methods.

Third, the training in infant methods available to students through the Normal School is such as to give them a valuable foundation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Reduction in the size of classes. It is generally agreed that infant classes, particularly those composed of children
entering school, should be no larger than thirty. If this were the case, teachers would be more favourably disposed to the adoption of individualised methods and the reorganisation necessarily involved. At present, they are sceptical and easily discouraged in these matters. This is not surprising when it is realised that many city schools contain infant classes of more than fifty children, seated in desks that occupy most of the available floor-space. With smaller classes it would be possible to view the child and his development in the proper perspective, to plan more suitable "readiness" programmes and adopt useful methods of studying new entrants.

2. Selection and Promotion of Infant Teachers. It would seem that the teaching of reading in the infant classes might be improved by the adoption of more flexible standards of promotion and greater opportunities for specialisation among teachers. It is doubtful whether the present inducements operate to the advantage of education. It is desirable that infant teachers who show outstanding ability should be recognised and specially certificated so that they may become infant mistresses before they are within a few years of retiring. The provision of further training for able infant teachers should also help in this matter.

3. The Advisory Work of Infant Mistresses. Under existing conditions, infant mistresses are so busy with class teaching that they have little time in which to assist and advise younger teachers, to plan experimental work, or to reorganise their departments along more modern lines. Where there are more than, say, a hundred children in Primers 1 - 4, the infant mistress should be freed from teaching for at least part of every day, the amount of
her "free" time increasing according to roll numbers.

4. The Education Gazette. Increased leadership from the Department might be given by devoting one whole number in addition to a permanent regular section of the "Gazette" to the subject of "Reading in Infant Classes." The confusion and uncertainty which exist in the minds of many infant teachers as to what they are doing and why they are doing it, might, by this means be dispelled.

5. "National Education". A lively discussion of infant methods might be carried on through this publication which has a wide circulation amongst teachers. New publications, brief accounts of overseas research, and of experiments planned and begun in New Zealand might be included each month, together with discussions on particular problems, as, for example, "A Programme for Five-Year-Olds."

6. Study Circles. Some extension of the study circle movement to small towns would be of great benefit to teachers not able to belong to the already existing groups. The New Education Fellowship Conference of 1938 has resulted in the organisation of annual Conferences, which are attended by some country teachers, but this by no means supplies the need felt by these teachers for more frequent discussion and exchange of ideas. In this connection, a lead could be given the discussion by means of cyclostyled material on infant problems, supplied by the Education Department.

7. Experimental Schools. There is something to be said for the establishment of an experimental school on lines similar to those run by some American Universities. Lack of finance, of course, is a serious handicap. Such a step, however, would help towards building up a body of scientific knowledge closely related to New
Zealand conditions, and therefore of practical benefit to teachers.

8. **Nursery Schools and Kindergartens.** Closer liaison with these organisations should greatly assist infant teachers with the five-year-olds. Many authorities in the United States take the view that a kindergarten should be an integral part of every elementary school.

9. **Text Books.** It is understood that the Education Department is at present engaged upon the production of new text books, and that, in this connection, reading materials suitable to the infant stages are under consideration. It is to be hoped that before long reading books comparable with the best American productions will be available.

10. **Libraries for Teachers' Use.** The comparative absence of library facilities for teachers is due mainly to financial circumstances but it would seem that some improvement might be effected by co-ordination of the existing facilities, viz. the Education Board, the Training College, and the New Education Fellowship. By this means more up-to-date references might be made available to all teachers.

11. **Some objective means of discovering the stage of readiness** reached by new entrants should be made available.

3. **Suggestions for Further Research.**

One of the first requirements to be revealed by this work is the need for some clarification of ideas about the teaching of reading in infant classes. There is little or no agreement as to

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(1) XVIIth Year Book, National Elementary Principal.
(2) It is understood that the New Zealand Council of Educational Research is engaged upon the construction of “readiness” tests.
the sort of programme that is followed, the best time to introduce certain activities, or the basic requirements that may be expected of a child at any particular stage. There is very little evidence to show that teachers are more than vaguely aware of the work being done on these topics in other countries, notably U.S.A.

It will be necessary first of all, to review the existing conditions under which reading is taught, both here and overseas. Any experimental evidence that is available to support either the rejection or the acceptance of certain procedures should be considered. After this, experiments should be planned to find out the best methods of teaching reading under New Zealand conditions. When the results of such carefully planned experiments were available, infant teachers would be better able to examine critically and constructively their own ideas of methods and procedures, and to modify these according to experimental evidence.

The Year Book of the National Elementary Principal sets out facts about reading in America, that have been established by scientific investigation. It is not possible to say whether these facts apply to New Zealand or not, since there is little scientific evidence available. It is unlikely that, were the position investigated, it would be better than in U.S.A. Below are some of the more important of the facts.

(i) Eight to forty per cent. of first grade children fail to be promoted.

(ii) Eight to twenty-five per cent. of the school population

(1) XVIIth Year Book, "Newer Practices in Reading in the Elementary School."
are retarded in reading.

(iii) Sixty to eighty per cent. of the retarded readers are boys.

(iv) Sixty to eighty per cent. of retarded readers have normal or superior intelligence.

(v) Approximately fifty per cent. of the adult population do not enjoy reading.

(vi) Only sixteen per cent. of those teaching beginning reading have had special infant training before entering on their particular work.

(vii) Eighty to ninety per cent. of study activities at the high school level involve reading. It will be agreed that it is very necessary to know what are the existing conditions here in New Zealand. The time for vague generalisations is past. Murray points out the lack of experimental evidence in many fields of education, and suggests that although the tools for measurement and investigation are at hand, there is little desire on the part of those whose business it is, to use them. He quotes Ayres' epigram, to the effect that pedagogical discussions flow freely, because they are unhampered by facts. If that is the position in America, how much more is it so here?

W. S. Gray draws attention to the need for active cooperation between investigators, school officers and teachers. He

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(1) Chapter I, p. 1 refers to the position in New Zealand.
(2) Chapter IV, p. 50 for comparison.
(3) Chapter I, p. 1.
(4) c.f. Position in New Zealand education system in this matter.
goes on to say:

"The scientist must continue his laboratory studies, discover fundamental differences in reading processes and habits, outline the principles which determined effective methods of teaching, and develop methods of investigation which can be used in the classroom. Administrators must provide agencies for dealing effectively with the mental processes and habits discovered in the laboratory, for applying the instruments of investigation which are available, for checking the results of teaching and for discovering additional problems for study and investigation. Teachers must be zealous students of reading problems, must apply the results of scientific studies in improving and refining their techniques of teaching, and must make use of scientific methods in the daily study of classroom problems. Only through continuous and whole-hearted co-operation on the part of all agencies interested in reading problems can we hope to attain an adequate solution of both the theoretical and the practical issues involved."

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2. National Elementary Principal:


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   (1) "A Hypothesis for Non-Oral Reading: Argument, Experiment and Results." McDade. (March 1937).
   (2) "A Study of the Entering E.I children in the Los Angeles City Schools." Elizabeth L. Woods and Staff. (September 1937).
   (3) "Summary of Reading Investigations." W. S. Gray. (February 1938).
   (4) "Measures of Simplicity and Beginning Texts in Reading." C.R. Stone (February 1938).
   (5) "An Experiment in Reading Readiness." A. J. Huggett. (September 1938).
   (8) "Grade Trends in Reading Progress in Kindergarten and Primary Grades." F. T. Wilson, C. White Fleming. (January 1940).


4. **Elementary School Journal:**
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(6) June, 1937. "The Influence of Phonics on Silent Reading in Grade I." H. L. Tate.


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(1) "Reading Readiness: A Study of Factors Determining Success or Failure in Beginning Reading." Gates & Bond. (May 1936).

(2) "Reading Readiness in a Progressive School." F. T. Wilson and Agnes Birke (April 1937).

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American Educational Research Association:


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APPENDIX II - QUESTIONNAIRE, ETC.
The Teacher in Charge of Infant Classes,

Dear Sir or Madam,

As part of a thesis to meet the requirements of the M.A. Degree in Education, I am investigating the subject of \textit{Reading in the Infant Room}. I should be very grateful if you would supply the information asked for in the enclosed questionnaire and return it and the instructions, if possible, by the end of April.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots

The Head Teacher,

Dear Sir or Madam,

With the permission of the Senior Inspector, I am investigating, as part of a thesis for the M.A. Degree in Education, the subject of \textit{Reading in the Infant Room}. I should be very grateful if you would be good enough to hand to the teacher in charge of Infant Classes, the accompanying letter and questionnaire.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots

The Head Teacher and
The Teacher in charge of Infant Classes,

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to ask for your co-operation in an investigation which is being carried out in my Department by \ldots \ldots . The inquiry is concerned with the means whereby children are taught to read and the nature of the difficulties which are commonly met with in the process.

\ldots \ldots has a sound background of teaching experience and has made a special study of the subject of the investigation. During the past two years she has done excellent work in the Department, assisting children who are held back by disabilities in reading.

If teachers will be good enough to provide the necessary data, I anticipate that the result of the investigation will be of considerable interest and practical value.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) H. E. FIELD

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION.

2. Number of Teachers:

3. Time per week to teaching of reading:

4. Methods: (i) Alphabetic. (ii) Phonic. (iii) Look and Say (a) word (b) phrase (c) sentence. (iv) Other methods. (v) Letter names.

5. Preparation for first Reading Book: (i), (ii), (iii), (iv).


7. Supplementary Readers:
   (i) Are these widely read?
   (ii) Are some prepared by teachers? By older pupils?
   (iii) Number available.
   (iv) Number regularly used.
   (v) Titles or series.

8. Play: (a) Imaginative or free play.
   (i) Is this a part of the weekly programme?
   (ii) Roughly how long is devoted to it?
   (iii) Is reading material developed from free play?
   (b) Involving materials and apparatus.
   (vii) Other activities.

9. Optimum Reading Age:
   (i) What age do you find this to be?
   (ii) Are you familiar with the idea of "reading readiness"?
   (iii) If so, what is your opinion of recent trends?

10. (a) Use of Tests:
    (i) Intelligence. (ii) Tests used. (iii) Achievement.
    (iv) Tests used. (v) Readiness. (vi) Tests used.
    (b) Promotion to Std. I.

11. Difficulties:
    (i) What are the main reading difficulties which appear?
    (ii) When do they appear? (iii) How are they detected?
    (iv) To what extent are they anticipated?
    (v) What special methods are used to overcome these difficulties?
    (vi) Do you notice any sex differences?
    (vii) Std. I in infant room classification.

12. Retardation. What constitutes retardation in the infant room?
GUIDE FOR FILLING IN ENQUIRY FORM.

Each section below refers to the corresponding section of the enquiry, and explains the type of material required under each heading. Please return these sheets.

1. **Roll Numbers:** Please give numbers in each P. class.
2. **Number of Teachers:** Please give total number of teachers in all P. classes.
3. **Time per week to teaching of reading:** Please include phonics, reading, games, spelling, and any other related subjects.
4. **Method:**
   (i) Please tick method or methods used and cross those not used.
   (ii) " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " 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(ii) Answer "yes" or "no".
(iii) If so, what is your opinion of recent educational and psychological findings? Please give brief reasons for your opinions.

10. Use of Tests:
   (i) If you use standardised intelligence tests please put a tick.
       If not, a cross.
   (ii) Please give names of tests used.
   (iii) If you use standardised achievement tests, please put a tick.
         If not, a cross.
   (iv) Please give names of achievement tests used.
   (v) If you use "readiness" tests please put a tick. If not, a cross.
   (vi) Please give names of any "readiness" tests used.

(b) Promotion to Std. 1. What is expected of a child for promotion to Std. 1? E.g. (i) What reading books? (ii) What reading age? (iii) What mental age? (iv) What other criteria?

11. Difficulties:
   (i) This is self-explanatory.
   (ii) 
   (iii) 
   (iv) 
   (v) 
   (vi) Please say whether you find that girls have more difficulties in reading than boys, or vice versa, or whether you have noticed no difference.
   (vii) Please say whether you consider that the inclusion of Std. 1 in the infant room classification would help to solve any or all of the difficulties under (i).

12. Retardation: By this is meant how weak in reading must a child be before you regard him as retarded in this subject? Please express in terms of the criteria you adopted under 10(b) on the previous page, if possible.

GENERAL: I shall welcome any suggestions you may wish to make regarding the teaching of reading; or any information you may have concerning your own difficulties—e.g. lack of floor space, unsuitability of furniture, lack of suitable reading material, lack of play facilities, too many children to allow time for individual teaching, requirements imposed by Std. 1 teachers, parents' insistence upon a reading book from the earliest possible moment, irregular attendance etc. I shall also be glad if you will indicate some of the sources from which you derive new ideas on the teaching of reading. Have you access to any overseas literature bearing on this subject? Please use a supplementary sheet if you are unable to get all your comments in the space provided. I shall be grateful for as much information as you care to offer.
APPENDIX III - FULLER REFERENCES.
MODERN TRENDS - REFERRED TO IN CHAPTER III.

(1) Children's felt needs and strongly motivated desires to read were utilised. These were on the level of child life, such as reading names, labels and notices. They were not an interpretation of what the child's interests in reading ought to be.

Attention was drawn to the forms and sounds of letters in connection with reading and writing situations. Under this progressive system children developed an increased desire to read, and absorb a few general principles, e.g. in reading a story you begin at the top, and you read from left to right. Certain parts of the story can be recognised by placement, or by some other characteristic feature. Cues such as likenesses, or differences, may be used, and a few words recognised.

So the experiment proceeded to the stage at which the children could read independently. No class book was used but a wealth of attractive reading material was available.

It may be noted that the children in this group were intelligent, had a good background of experience, good language ability and good physical health. This does not mean that the same methods could not be followed with children not so well endowed. Progress would be slower, and achievements not of such a high standard, but the essentials - the needs, abilities and interest of the child - would be considered just the same.

Dear Mrs. . . . .

Some people are disturbed when children of six or six and a half years do not begin formal reading and are assigned to pre-reading groups. This letter is intended to allay fears about the progress of children in such assignments.

As in walking and talking, children vary in the ages at which they read. Some children have reading readiness as soon as they enter first grade. Others, equally bright, retain their baby reactions much longer and the word symbols do not interest them until the newness of the school situation wears off. It is disastrous to force a child to read before he has an interest in words and stories, as it is to force him to walk before the limbs are strong enough to support the body. Often the child who walks later, can outrun his brother or sister who learned earlier; so it is with readers. When the reading ability does come, the child often recovers his apparent loss of time in starting.

While responding only to words so far— has the ability to learn to read but will not be introduced to reading methods until a reading readiness is shown. Until that time I am exposing—— to other interests to awaken this desire, without emphasising reading itself.

In case you would like to talk to me about———- I should be glad to see you.

Cordially yours,