

History in New Zealand Schools

BY THE early 1870s most provinces had established local regulations for primary schools, organizing the school curriculum in levels known as standards. Following the English system, history was compulsory in standards five and six. In Canterbury and Wellington it was also taught in the lower standards.¹ The first national regulations, gazetted in September 1878, after primary education became secular, free, and compulsory, made history one of the subjects from standard three to standard six in which an individual pass was required. For standard four the required course of study was the 'succession of Houses and Sovereigns from 1066 AD to 1485 AD and the leading events of the period known in connection with the reigns and centuries to which they belong and in their own character. Precise dates will not be required though a knowledge of them may assist in referring each event to the proper reign.'² Although criticized for being too ambitious and inflexible for a country with few trained teachers or schools and with a mobile population, the regulations remained virtually unchanged until the close of the nineteenth century.

The dangers implicit in teaching history were early recognized. Fears of denominational bias had led to efforts to have history removed from the national curriculum in 1877. A conscience clause was put into the 1877 Act, allowing parents to withdraw children from history lessons.³

Only the geography prescription in the 1878 regulations included references to New Zealand.⁴ Local texts were not widely available until the 1890s and early twentieth century, and school work was very much determined by what textbooks were at hand. By the mid-1880s parents were complaining about the cost of textbooks and the frequent changes of texts. It was also clear that many British texts were inadequate and inaccurate. One account of the Maori stated that 'their huge hideous idols are called maraes'. Some texts confused New Zealand with Australia: 'In Australia are the mountains running along the centre of New Zealand, the highest of which Mt Egmont, is between eleven and twelve thousand feet'. Britain was clearly the centre of the world. To find New Zealand

1 W.H.S. Dennis, 'Curriculum Copying: New Light on the Development of "Standards" in New Zealand During the 1870s', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* (NZJES), XIV, 1 (1979), p.4.

2 Quoted Dennis, p.9.

3 John L. Ewing, *Development of New Zealand Primary School Curriculum 1877-1970*, Wellington, 1970, p.77.

4 Colin McGeorge, 'Learning about God's Own Country', NZJES, XVIII, 1 (1983), p.4.

on a globe, students were advised to first find Britain, then to turn the globe through 180 degrees.⁵

By the 1890s there was an obvious need for more familiar material. Support grew for a specially designed national school reader, an idea first suggested by the Otago Trades and Labour Council. In parliament, and newspaper editorials, concern that 'children were growing up ignorant of the practical requirements of New Zealand life', and that a 'national spirit' should be fostered, added warm support to government plans to produce a locally orientated reader.⁶ In 1895, under the direction of William Pember Reeves, the first National School Reader was published. Included were literary extracts, accounts of notable events such as the voyages of Abel Tasman, James Cook, trouble at Kororareka, and the gold-rushes. The Reverend W. J. Habens, the Inspector-General of Education, contributed an article on early settlement in New Zealand. The writings of F. E. Maning, Samuel Butler, and Lady Barker were included. It had 289 pages, 13 illustrations, hard covers, and was a bargain at 1s.1d. But it was a dismal flop. Its reading level, too advanced for 13 or 14 year-old readers, was forbidding even to teachers. By 1896, only 1945 out of 10,000 had sold. In the 1940s, stocks still held by the government printer were disposed of free to intermediate school libraries.⁷

Whether history was being effectively taught was a real question. History books were based on the lives of the monarchs, with sub-headings of birth, reign, marriage, issue, death, character, wars, and memorable events. Though most teachers were hard-working, capable, and earnest in their desire to do their best, many were inadequately prepared and unfamiliar with the content and often inaccurate even with dates. The standard pass system, though providing greater uniformity of assessment, gave teaching a mechanical quality. Children were little receptacles into which as much factual information as possible was crammed. The pupils, with only dim and unintelligent ideas about anything other than dates and facts, were incapable of distinguishing between the important and the unimportant.⁸

Concern about inadequate teaching led inspectors in 1885 to recommend that history should be dropped from standard three. However, Habens stood firm, blaming the inspectors themselves for interpreting the prescription absurdly. They had asked children in standard three to answer questions on constitutional matters including the Reform Bill. An inspector had asked pupils in standard six to give a sketch of the history of banking in England.⁹ History was retained in standard three, but became a class subject, not requiring an individual pass. When historical readers were used more frequently in the 1890s the teaching improved. Despite the regulations, there were still many variations in what was

5 Colin McGeorge, 'The Use of School Books as a Source for the History of Education 1878-1914', NZJES, XIV, 2 (1979), p.144.

6 Quoted Don Mackay, 'The School Text-Book Controversy and the Development of the National School Reader: An Otago Perspective', NZJES, X, 2 (1975), pp.140-8.

7 Ewing, p.70.

8 Ian Cumming, *Glorious Enterprise: The History of the Auckland Education Board 1857-1957*, Christchurch, 1959, p.259.

9 Ewing, p.68.

taught. In a great many schools, where teachers were not confident with the material, history and geography were not taught at all.

For the privileged minority in the nation's secondary schools it was the principal, subject to approval by the Board of Governors, who selected the curriculum, prescribed and chose the texts.¹⁰ The curriculum, based on that of the English grammar schools, was designed to prepare children for university. Subjects studied were English, French, Latin, Greek, mathematics, science, history, or geography. From 1877 to 1914 history held a minor place in the classics-dominated curriculum of the New Zealand secondary schools. It had equally poor status at university level, where provision for the teaching of history was limited. Public attitudes to history reflected those in Britain twenty years earlier, where it was seen as an utilitarian subject of low status. The 12 secondary schools who submitted their curriculum outlines to a Royal Commission in 1879 revealed that the most generous time allocated to history was two hours a week.¹¹

Studies followed a chronological pattern. The lower school began with Greek, Roman, or early British history and successive classes worked through seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British history. The course was indicated by the title of the text book used. The emphasis on the political history of England and Empire in the Civil Service examinations and the university-conducted upper school examinations stressed the subject's function for citizenship training and transmitting cultural values.

As in the primary school, to study history was to exercise one's memory. Students, expected to have a smattering of the entire span of English history, had little time to reflect on cause and effect. Names, dates, and events were stressed, with a great deal of rote learning, including learning chronological tables. Teachers, with limited professional training and large classes, relied heavily on the textbook.¹² Examination papers emphasized factual recall. Matriculation candidates in 1882 had to answer nine compulsory questions in two hours. It was impossible to answer in depth.¹³

By the turn of the century, with an increasing number of the students and teachers New Zealand-born, modifications to the strong British emphasis of the curriculum became likely. As attitudes to children and education changed, intellectual growth was seen to require more practical work, lessons which provided stimulation, and greater consideration of pupil abilities and environment. Changes were inevitable. In the new primary curriculum which followed the appointment of George Hogben as Inspector-General in 1904, history was included in the nine prescribed subjects. No detailed prescriptions were given. Programmes were to be arranged with regard to the circumstances of the school and the surroundings of the children. The keynote was 'ordered freedom for pupils, teachers, and inspectors'. The compulsory history course was to be a series of lessons roughly chronological and spread over two, three, or four years.

10 Not in district high schools, which were nationally controlled.

11 Roy Gordon Shuker, 'History in the New Zealand Secondary School: A Study in Aspects of Curriculum Development', PhD thesis, Victoria University, Wellington, 1978, p.62.

12 *ibid.*, p.67.

13 *ibid.*, p.68.

Among the suggested topics were 'The Norman Conquest and its chief effects on the English Language, Social Life and Government', 'The Rise of Absolute Monarchy', and 'Free Trade and Protection'. Civic instruction, to be included in history, was in the form of topics such as the franchise, local government, courts, and magistrates. There was an additional history subject which consisted of a period approach to British history. In 1913 and 1919 further revisions took place, removing the compulsory aspect and providing additional history and civics. The revisions were part of a move away from rigid definition of syllabus requirements. Teachers were encouraged to co-ordinate subjects in the school programmes.

Teaching skills, too, were changing. In 1915 an inspector suggested 'a good oral lesson with reasonable use of the blackboard and other aids should precede the pupils' reading of the textbook at home'.¹⁴ Though memorizing was still strongly emphasized, there were many enthusiastic teachers who succeeded in creating in pupils an abiding interest in the subject. In the same year, the Education Department set up a special committee to examine the courses of instruction in history in primary and secondary schools and to draft suggestions. The major innovation, which had most impact at primary level, was the abandonment of a rigid chronological approach in favour of broad themes. Its recommendation formed the basis for a revised history syllabus in the first two years of post-primary school. But in the upper school it had limited impact.

In 1923, a Ministerial letter to inspectors stated that history was not as well taught as it deserved to be. As an optional subject for the proficiency examination it was frequently neglected. There were no satisfactory texts, lessons were often dictated notes, there was too much emphasis on chronology. The Minister of Education was sufficiently concerned to form a special committee in 1924, with the aim of outlining a new syllabus and suggesting effective teaching methods in both primary and secondary schools. For the first time primary and secondary prescriptions in a subject were looked at together, reflecting interest in a continuing curriculum. The committee recommended 'a study of development' to be the main feature of history teaching in primary schools, with many of the topics centring on the life and work of noted men and women. As the time allocated to history was limited to two hours a week, the committee considered that 'the study of our own national development must claim the whole of that time'.¹⁵

The report also recommended special preparation for teaching history, with specialized teaching in the larger primary schools and a programme of inservice training. Specific suggestions included the use of time charts and a particular textbook, *The Pioneers*, an account of early exploration, first settlers, and the beginning of the main European settlements in New Zealand. Intended for standards five and six, it was almost certainly a source book for the teachers as well. Comprehensive courses for secondary schools were also outlined.¹⁶ This new syllabus came into force in 1927.

14 *ibid.*, p.83.

15 Ewing, p.169.

16 *ibid.*

Hogben's 1904 syllabus had stimulated the production of local texts. New Zealand publishers stole a march on British competitors by producing books specifically designed for the local syllabus. By 1905 it was possible to cover the whole of the primary curriculum with local texts, most bearing the magical phrase, 'Specifically prepared for the New Zealand Code'. From 1922, the publishing of lists of approved texts in the *Education Gazette* encouraged the regular updating of texts, and New Zealand publishers carved out a share of the market.

After 1907, the *School Journal*, reflecting a groping towards a national self-image, included a good deal of New Zealand material, patriotic and imperialistic pieces.¹⁷ It dealt systematically with New Zealand plants, animals, geography, and history, creating local heroes and heroines such as Henare Taratoa, Julia Martin, Bugler Allan, and the self-sacrificing stewardesses of the *Penguin* and the *Wairarapa*. School readers also reflected efforts at the turn of the century to create a local New Zealand literature. Towards 1914, increasing emphasis was put on imperial ideology and the New Zealanders' unique relationship with the Mother Country. New Zealand was the most loyal colony, the most like Britain. New Zealanders had more of the virtues of the British race. They were the most ready to pour out blood and money in British wars.¹⁸

The New Zealand landscape, especially the pink and white terraces and the Mt Cook region, received good coverage in school readers. Issues of settlement and economic development were stressed in geographies and often flowed on to discussion of the supposed similarities between New Zealand and Britain. Both were island countries with temperate climates and physical similarities. New Zealand was the mirror image of Britain, the Britain of the Pacific, newest England. The implication was that the European settlers were obviously at the right place, whereas the Maori were probably too far south for their own good.¹⁹

The racial attitudes of the community were reflected in the school texts. The Maori was pictured in postcard style. Pre-European Maori society was quickly glossed over and given a good but qualified press: 'he was a savage, it is true, but a noble savage'.²⁰ Formal equality before the law was emphasized, as Maori history was viewed through Pakeha eyes.

Students were reminded frequently that they were lucky to be in New Zealand, with the ills of the old world left behind: 'we must all work together so that the sickliness, the grinding poverty, the class of hopeless paupers, and professional criminals which disfigures so many a spot in the Old World shall never darken our New Zealand lives.'²¹ Not only was the European population of New Zealand fortunate to be of British stock, but they could congratulate themselves on being the best of British stock. 'No colony was ever so carefully and wisely colonised

17 E.P. Malone, 'The New Zealand School Journal and the Imperial Ideology', *New Zealand Journal of History*, VII, 1 (1973), pp.12-27.

18 McGeorge, 'Learning', p.8.

19 *ibid.*, p.5.

20 Quoted *ibid.*, p.5.

21 *ibid.*, p.6.

as New Zealand. To begin with only men and women of unusual courage and enterprise were willing to cross the world in sailing ships and seek their fortune in so distant a land. For settlements such as those of Canterbury and Otago, colonists were specially selected and those pioneers, many of whom were well-educated men of unusual ability, left a deep and lasting influence on the history of a young nation.²² Also fostered was the myth of the incomparably brave and resourceful New Zealand soldier. New Zealanders not only had all the British virtues of love of the sea, passion for freedom, love of honesty, and straight dealing and talking, but they were also stalwart colonials, healthy, resourceful, independent, and vigorous. The school readers, by the 1920s, established that everything in New Zealand from mountains to sheep was higher, longer, or heavier than elsewhere.

After 1903, when free places were introduced, secondary school rolls expanded. By 1914, there were 6056 pupils at 33 secondary schools, and 2100 in the secondary departments of district high schools. As the administration of the free place regulations gave the Department of Education much tighter control over the secondary school curricula, the power of the individual headmasters declined. Teachers, not united, and with limited training, played only a minor role as a pressure group. Although only a minority of secondary school students went on to tertiary education, the most important influence on the secondary school curriculum up to 1914 remained the university. Classics still dominated the curriculum.

From 1914 to 1942 secondary education was characterized by the expansion of post-primary rolls, increasing criticism of the dominance of the University Entrance examination, and the development of the Education Department's influence. In the latter part of the period the post-primary teachers developed as a professional group as specialized secondary teacher training increased. The élitist, academic curriculum of the nineteenth century was gradually modified, reflecting an increasing concern with the education of every individual. Curriculum change was characteristically ad hoc and imposed from above. Emphasis on the history of England and the Empire persisted, until the 1930s saw the emergence of a greater New Zealand content and of world history.

A committee set up by the University Senate in 1912 to encourage the study of history discussed the weaknesses of current history teaching, its low status as a school subject, the heavy factual bias, the over-use of the textbook, and the breadth of the syllabi.²³ It concluded that 'from the bottom to the top of our educational system History is heavily handicapped compared with other subjects'.²⁴ It was concerned that New Zealanders were growing up ignorant of their own traditions and recommended that every pupil in secondary school should learn history, that marks allocated to history in Civil Service, Junior and Senior Scholarship examinations should be raised, and that there should be better co-ordination between primary and secondary schools so that the syllabus formed

22 Quoted *ibid.*, p.7. from *The Story of New Zealand: Book III: The Growth of the Colony 1853-1906* (c.1910).

23 Shuker, p.69.

24 *ibid.*, p.70.

a logical continuation.²⁵ There were some changes. Marks for Scholarship history were increased. As history became a compulsory subject for free place holders, the time devoted to it in the upper primary school doubled. Though the status of history had been raised, the nature and teaching of the subject itself remained unchanged.

If student numbers mean anything, 1915–1944 was the golden age for history in the secondary school. In 1930 history and civics was taken by 93.1% of all boys and 95.5% of all girls in secondary schools. It was second only to English and mathematics. In 1936 history was clearly the most popular option in secondary, technical, and combined schools and a strong option in district high schools.²⁶ When history became one of the compulsory parts of the three-year course for the new School Certificate examination in 1934 its position seemed assured.

But its status in university-conducted exams remained low. In 1918 it was worth a maximum of 300 marks in Scholarship, whereas Latin and English were worth 600 each. Arguments put forward by the UE Board for an increase in its value were rejected by the Entrance Committee. However, its advocates continued undaunted. The 1925 Education Department report on history teaching stressed the social value of history, its contribution to the moral welfare of the state by training for citizenship, the advantages culturally and educationally in pupils having a knowledge of the history of the country and the wider Empire.²⁷ Nevertheless, University-set examinations continued to be focused primarily on English history. The scholarship syllabus introduced in 1913, and its replacement for 1920–1952, was exclusively English history. The syllabus for matriculation in 1914 became three periods of English history, which took turn about. It was replaced in 1933 by one which put more emphasis on post-1714 English history. In 1937, to provide greater relevance to New Zealand students, topics on the British Empire were included.

The expansion of New Zealand history was closely linked with the country's political and constitutional development and the growth of a national literary and artistic culture. An increased number of published works by historians such as J. B. Condliffe, Willis Airey, F. L. Wood, and J. C. Beaglehole reflected and stimulated a greater interest in New Zealand history in the inter-war years. The books probably encouraged the popularity of history in secondary schools in the 1930s. New Zealand was, by then, also more aware of its geographic status as a Pacific nation.

Despite the popularity of history as a school subject, the teaching of it still caused concern. In 1935 Professor James Rutherford, the examiner for UE and Scholarship, commented: 'The best of textbooks, with very few exceptions, are dull lifeless compilations, which sacrifice reality and interest to comprehensiveness.'²⁸ University examiners strongly criticized the standard achieved by history candidates for scholarship and matriculation, which they largely attrib-

25 *ibid.*, pp.70–71.

26 *ibid.*, p.72.

27 *ibid.*, p.75.

28 *ibid.*, p.82.

uted to poor teaching. Classes were often taught by teachers who had no specific qualifications for history and used no resources other than the textbook. Pupils were still made to learn masses of detail without any attempt to understand their significance.

When the principle of selective entry to secondary schools was abandoned, together with the proficiency certificate in 1936, secondary schools had to broaden the curriculum to provide alternative objectives to UE. In 1944, the Senate of the University of New Zealand raised the standard of entrance by one year, leaving secondary schools comparatively free to adapt their courses in the first three years. The new goal was to be School Certificate, awarded on the basis of an external examination conducted by the Department of Education. A consultative committee under William Thomas restructured the curriculum. The committee's report, gazetted as regulations in 1945, formed the basis for post-war secondary education.

This report criticized the traditional academic approach and recommended a compulsory core of the subjects and activities for the first three years. Social studies and general science were designed to prevent traditional subjects from dominating the core. Social studies was intended as an integrated course of history, civics, and geography with some descriptive economics. The committee wanted to see work in the classroom in a freer and more humane setting, with greater emphasis on flexibility, diversity, and increased pupil participation. The attempt to orient secondary schools to the needs of the individual pupils reflected the egalitarian philosophy of the first Labour government.

Other factors of post-war society affected the situation. There was a dramatic, almost unmanageable, extension of secondary schooling caused by raising of the school-leaving age and the rapid population growth of the immediate post-war years. This increased strain on the financial and manpower resources of the Education Department restricted its ability to implement the report. There were no extensive refresher courses. Staffing shortages forced teachers to teach subjects, especially in the common core, for which they had no interest or expertise. Many taught in a perfunctory manner, proving that little is changed in a classroom merely by passing legislation.

In the primary school, a revised syllabus was developed, designed to lead easily into social studies in the secondary schools. The four main themes were a study of the local district, how people lived in New Zealand, how people lived in other places, how people lived at other times. Neither a chronological treatment of history nor a systematic study of geography was required. For each class four or five major topics were prescribed; booklets and articles in the *School Journal* provided supporting material. It was formally issued in 1961 as 'a study of people; of what they are like, their beliefs, their aspirations, their pleasures, the problems they have to face, of how and where they live, the work they do and the ways in which they organise themselves.'²⁹ Most details were left to be worked out in school and class schemes. At forms one and two and earlier, some historical topics are studied within the social studies framework, but few of these

teachers have historical training. However, some excellent readers by historians such as Elsie Locke and Ruth Ross have been issued by the School Publications Branch, and a number of effective resources developed. For forms one to four, as recommended by the Currie Commission in 1962, a composite syllabus has been developed to encourage the co-ordination of primary and secondary programmes.

In the secondary school, social studies did not develop as the Thomas Committee hoped. Teachers were slow to adapt traditional history and geography programmes. Many subject specialists were hostile, fearing that social studies had destroyed the value and identity of their subject. There were few resources available. The Education Department, overwhelmed by the massive increase in rolls, failed to provide guidance and support. Until the 1970s, history and geography remained within social studies. Then, a new American-influenced sociological social studies was introduced, using a series of general themes: social change, social control, interaction, cultural difference — each providing the foundation for a year of the course (forms one to four). Examples of each central theme are studied, comparing different societies at different times, considering the implications as they affect individual lives. It was a way of side-stepping the very traditional, factual, 'British heritage' approach to school history of the 1960s, increasingly felt to be irrelevant. Though a few topics are suggested which might be historical, its effect is to diminish the historical dimension.

Observers have been very critical of the impact of social studies on history.³⁰ Although most schools do include historical material in their social studies programme, few have comprehensive historical resources. Most social studies teachers have a geography background, and only a few have any concern to include a historical dimension. Even for those trained in history, it is very difficult to place a historical, chronological framework into social studies. Social studies focuses on the present, not the past, deals in general perceptions, not about the particular experience of people. There is little place for the narrative form, or the cumulative and developmental structure most history requires. Different aspects of a historical process may be studied but the end result remains piecemeal.

The shortage of resources means that teachers rotate the topics. Topics are discrete and relate to each other only through the theme. History becomes a miscellaneous jumble. The topics have no historical framework or focus, no bare skeleton of chronological order, and students cannot develop any sense of sequence. As a result, form five students have no background historical knowledge except what they have put together for themselves. Isolated topics on aspects of the past do not provide them with a coherent view of twentieth-century national history, nor any practice in using historical evidence. They are more likely to have covered highly selective aspects of modern world history than New Zealand history. Most lack historical skills and teachers comment that students find it difficult to acquire these in the bare year. In a survey conducted by Ann

30 Ann Low-Beer, 'The Eclipse of History in New Zealand Schools', NZJES, XXI, 2 (1986), pp.113-22.

Low-Beer, only 25% of older pupils felt that social studies had given them any introduction to history.³¹

In the senior school, history in the post-war period has suffered a slow but steady decline in popularity. The percentage of those taking history for School Certificate dropped from 34% of candidates in 1968 to 28.3% in 1972.³² The 13% fall in history numbers in the fifth form between 1968 and 1975 compared unfavourably with the 31% increase in entries for all subjects. By 1982 only 18% of all fifth formers were taking history.³³ The decline is still continuing. In 1989, 14.7% of fifth formers studied history, a fall from 16.1% the previous year.³⁴

As sixth form certificate replaced UE, the curriculum widened and the decline in the sixth form history numbers became equally alarming. In 1974, 35.2% of all sixth formers took history. This dropped to 21.2% in 1982.³⁵ A greater variety of subjects was syphoning students off. In 1989 the subject just survives as one of the ten most popular subjects for girls. Not so for boys.³⁶

The decline in the seventh form appeared at first to be not so marked (31.5% to 27.5% from 1974 to 1982). Yet the overall trend was for bigger seventh forms than in the past. More recent figures indicate that the situation may have stabilized.³⁷ The 1982 survey commented that the decline added up to a 'sad state of affairs for history'.³⁸ Teachers of history were becoming a rare breed. Two-thirds of schools in the survey had one or two practising history teachers only. With supply greatly exceeding demand, large numbers of qualified history teachers were not teaching history.

Student questionnaires revealed that many undervalued the vocational possibilities of history. Boys were twice as likely as girls to stress history as irrelevant. The effect of social studies appears to lead more students into geography, seen as dealing with the tangible. Generally, those who have not studied history see it as a dry study of dates.³⁹ Those who actually took history found it stimulating, though they, too, did not necessarily value it highly.⁴⁰ But seventh form students, enjoying abstract thought, are more positive in their responses. History seems progressively easier in comparison with other subjects as pupils get older.⁴¹ As a subject which students can pick up for the first time at seventh form level, history offers seventh formers a wider academic choice.

Changing too, in the post-war period, was the perceived value of history.

31 *ibid.*, p.114.

32 D. Keen, 'Decline and Fall', *Education*, XXVIII, 6 (1979), p.8.

33 'Survey of Needs, Forms 5-7 History', National History Curriculum Committee, 1982.

34 *New Zealand School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate Examination Statistics 1988*, Wellington, 1990, p.18.

35 'Survey of Needs'.

36 10.2% of female sixth form certificate students study history. *New Zealand School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate Examination Statistics 1988*, p.47.

37 1989 numbers for University Bursary show a slight increase over the previous year — from 4085 to 4814 (28.3% to 28.7%).

38 'Survey of Needs'.

39 Keen, pp.8-9.

40 Roy Shuker, 'A Research Report, Pupils and History', Victoria University, Wellington, 1977.

41 Keen, p.9.

Though its contribution to 'informed citizenship' remained, the notion that its value lay in training the mind was gaining ground. With memorizing giving way to mental activity and discipline, 'inquiry learning', which emphasized training students in 'historical thinking', became influential. History could play a part in producing people who might not know all the answers but who could ask the right questions. History would teach a student not what to think but how to think.

However, for several decades much secondary school history continued to be content-oriented and dominated by public examinations which emphasized factual knowledge. Because School Certificate was a passport to a wide variety of employment opportunities, its vocational significance affected teaching methods. Picking examination questions, dictating notes, the handing out of cyclostyled notes and model answers, all became part of the teacher's stock-in-trade, especially as promotion prospects were influenced by a good record of passes. The tale is told of one school certificate marker (about 1965) who read ten identically-worded answers on British educational reform, stating that these reforms brought an end to rote learning.⁴² Children inevitably defended themselves from boredom by mastering the art of the side-track.

In the 1950s, teacher involvement in curriculum development had been limited by their preoccupation with particular subject syllabi, details of examination procedure, and marking. Teacher Associations had been concerned with recruitment and salaries. But the 1960s saw teachers becoming more active in curriculum development. In 1964 the Post-Primary Teachers Association set up subject curriculum panels and an Association curriculum officer was appointed to keep up with pedagogic and content developments, evaluate experiment in the classroom, recommend curriculum changes, and advise on teacher attitudes. In 1963 a Curriculum Development Unit was established by the Education Department. The CDU energetically developed a variety of learning resources. A large number of historical recordings went into the tape library, schools began to receive archive packs, reprints of old newspapers, and a regular history newsletter offering practical teaching advice. Teachers were no longer working in isolation.

By the 1960s, though dictation and lecture methods were still strong, more flexible methods were developing. There were moves towards active participation in lessons by all pupils. The use of audio-visual resources, primary source material, and inquiry techniques added interest. Evaluation became more clearly tied to specific aims and objectives. Teachers gained support and encouragement from History Teachers' Associations and CDU publications. The *Historical News*, first published in 1960 by the Canterbury University History Department, gave secondary school teachers useful advice.

Textbooks produced in 1965 by Heinemanns were the first to be written specifically for fifth form students, giving teachers more confidence about content. These very solid narratives were far too difficult for many students, but did include pictures and extracts from newspapers and letters of the time. Britain remained an important focus of study, but School Certificate history included

42 Trevor Agnew, 'A Spirit of Inquiry', *Education*, XXVIII, 6 (1979), pp.12-14.

New Zealand and the world. The UE course (1949–1966) included some history of Europe, the British Empire, the US, and Japan. Scholarship history remained predominantly British Empire and Commonwealth. Prescriptions were simply bold statements of content. Political history still dominated, although some economic and social history was creeping in. With the universities giving greater emphasis to courses in New Zealand history, New Zealand's Asian and Pacific setting was receiving more attention. This provided the background to a new School Certificate prescription in 1965. The Education Department announced that its aim was to provide a body of historical knowledge 'which will make for well-informed citizenship'.⁴³ Changes in examination prescriptions in the 1960s attempted to define content areas and options more clearly, to state aims more explicitly, and to make the three years from fifth to seventh forms a continuum of historical study. The sixth and seventh form courses were also widened.

By the 1970s, declining history numbers in the senior school made it necessary to demonstrate clearly the value of history. With the proposed School Certificate revision, the subcommittee concentrated on the justification for the study of history. It first prepared a list of aims and objectives, examination methods, and criteria. Only then was content selected. Seven basic themes, each developed in two case studies, were selected. The themes included social welfare, cultural interaction, international relations, government and leadership, and conflict. Though criticized and subject to considerable content revision, these have proved a comparatively successful choice.

Outlining the skills of history has been particularly successful. The general objectives were to help pupils develop an understanding of some of the major trends and developments in our society and in others; to help pupils develop an understanding of historical inquiry and interpretation. The specific objectives included such skills as the ability to interpret historical resources, to recognize varying points of view, to distinguish bias and propaganda, to distinguish facts from opinion. It was considered that a student should be able to make a 'historical study' by defining an area of enquiry, selecting relevant material, and forming tenable generalizations. The student should also be able to classify, contrast, and compare, and to present an argument clearly, in sequence, and supported by relevant examples. These have proved to be realistic objectives and have brought history within the range of any 15 year-old who can read and write.

But many teachers felt that the sixth and seventh form syllabi lagged behind. One teacher said the exams gave the impression of having been written on the back of a bus ticket during the examiner's morning trip to varsity.⁴⁴ Changes at the sixth form level, however, rescued the sixth form syllabus from domination by an external examination. The decade 1966–1976 saw much discussion about education, and by the mid-1980s a new response to curriculum development. Curricula should be school-based, but developed within national guidelines (defined parameters) actively involving staff, parents, and students.

In the 1980s, declining numbers sent a wave of panic through history

43 *Education Gazette*, Wellington, 1 May 1965.

44 Agnew, p.13.

departments. Despite comparatively well-qualified, enthusiastic, able teachers,⁴⁵ history was on the defensive in the classroom. Yet widespread interest in historical plays, films, books, and genealogy showed that the community itself valued the study of the past. The challenge and competition from other subjects obliged history teachers to reappraise content and teaching methods. Some history teachers, fresh from successes in history components of the fourth form social studies syllabus, or from the more flexible sixth form course, thought that the answer lay in stimulating the curiosity of young people in history units dealing with local history resources. The use of primary source material, oral history, diaries, letters and accounts, and historical sites was advocated. New approaches were suggested, involving field trips and training for independent study, providing relative freedom for the teacher to modify each unit to suit the interests and reactions of each class. Students needed to see history as an open-ended inquiry, needed to experience a sense of enjoyment, and to be trained in attainable skills. Such studies would provide specific and recognizable examples of wider historical themes, while introducing the basic skills of history. These 'special studies' were to include local studies, oral history activities, and research units.

The National Syllabus Committee, formed to solve the problem of a fast disappearing clientele, constructed a more flexible approach to history in the secondary school. It was concerned to introduce greater local content within national guidelines. The syllabus committee also recognized the need to modify the monocultural approach to history in New Zealand classrooms. Even the fifth form race relations topic in the cultural interaction theme was open to criticism. It was still Maori history seen through Pakeha eyes; a Pakeha framework used to structure a Maori past. It did not answer the growing need of Maori to study their own past in their own way. How to include a different concept of knowledge and of the past was a question that baffled the committee. It had to accept that only the Maori community could provide the answers. The best that could be done was to set out clearly, in guidelines for local curriculum development, the need to recognize a Maori dimension to our shared heritage. So Heads of History Departments were provided with advice for including a Maori dimension when structuring history courses in secondary schools.⁴⁶

Similarly the Committee was aware that the dominance of political history had long precluded a balanced view of the past. There was a need for more social history so that issues like gender could be confronted. Heads of Departments are also required to ensure that New Zealand content is well represented in their school's programme. National guidelines included advice on structuring courses to implement these new perspectives.⁴⁷ These new emphases were made possible by a more flexible approach to external examinations and the rapid development of internal assessment.

45 *Report on the Social Studies Subjects Survey*, Department of Education, Wellington, 1987, pp.85, 127.

46 'Guidelines For Planning A Co-ordinated Forms 5-7 History Programme', Hawke's Bay History Teachers Association and the Curriculum Development Unit.

47 *ibid.*

Unfortunately, the number of students taking history in the senior school has continued to decline. That most students no longer choose to take history can in part be blamed on a continuing low public perception of history as a vocational or academic subject. In the current primary and secondary curriculum there is no provision for all students to develop their historical skills, to enjoy historical narrative, or even to exercise historical imagination. Significant efforts have been made to outline possible core history courses in the 1988 report, 'Heritage and History in Schools',⁴⁸ but the main emphasis on curriculum development has now shifted to the local rather than the national arena. Yet all is not lost. Among the hopeful signs has been the high value placed on 'heritage' by the public in its submissions to the Curriculum Review of the mid-1980s, to which the 1988 report was a direct response.⁴⁹ Another is public interest and concern about the Treaty of Waitangi. With every school required by its charter to fulfil the intent of the principles of the Treaty, there is an opportunity to focus on those aspects of New Zealand history which enable our students to understand the circumstances of the signing of the Treaty and its changing status. Historians, history teachers, and those who value historical skills and knowledge have a responsibility to make their voices heard at the local level, so that all students have the opportunity to study history.

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48 'Heritage and History in Schools: A Report to the Director General of Education by the Departments of History of the New Zealand Universities', Massey University, Palmerston North, 1988.

49 *The Curriculum Review: Report of the Committee to Review the Curriculum for Schools*, Department of Education, Wellington, 1987, p.73.