(Swarbrick, 2009a)

Country schooling

Getting an **education**: 1800s

In the mid-19th century, **education** was something that most New Zealanders wanted but only some had. Some Māori learned to read and write at mission schools from 1814, and a few English, Scottish and Irish settlers were very well educated. But in the 1850s about 25% of Pākehā could not read or write, and another 14% could only read. Most parents must have dreamed of a better life, including the chance of schooling, for their children.

Christ's College, 1867

Towards an **education** system

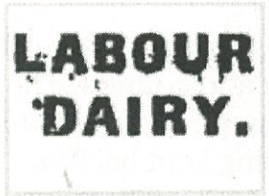
Before the **Education Act 1877**, children were lucky to get an **education**, as it was neither **compulsory** nor free. Only the well-off could afford school fees. Some schools were set up by religious groups, and others by provincial governments, but they were not evenly spread.

Aponga School

The southern provinces of Nelson and Otago had more efficient and better funded **education** systems than northern provinces such as Auckland. In the 19th century more people lived in rural areas – but most schools were in towns.

Separate schools

Before primary schooling was free for everyone, the Native Schools system provided schools for Māori children, usually in remote communities. Parents asked for a school, and helped subsidise the teacher's salary. By 1874 there were 64 such schools. After **1877**, Māori children could also attend state schools. But the separate system for Māori continued until the 1960s.



The child-labour problem

Education Act 1877

The **Education Act 1877** established free, **compulsory** primary **education** to standard six (year eight) for all New Zealand children, and public schools were set up by regional **education** boards. Of the approximately 730 public primary schools in **1877**, 78% were country schools with one or two teachers. They provided **education** for about half of primary school-age children.

Country schoolroom

Funding country schools

The government funded its schools through a 'capitation grant'. A fixed

sum was granted for each child on the roll, provided he or she met a certain level of attendance. If a school did not meet an average overall attendance level, only some of its costs were covered, and parents had to help pay the teacher's salary.


MAKATERAMEA SCHOOL.

A correspondent writes as follows: The inspector, Mr Gow, paid his annual visit (for the purpose of examination) to the Makaterarea School on February 1st, 1893. The following is the result:

Presented for standard work 14
Below standard work 8

Total 22

Standard	Presented	Failed	Passed
5	3	3	0

Inspector's report

Country schools were often underfunded, as many pupils could not meet the attendance requirement. In winter, bad weather and rough roads, and colds and flu, often stopped them from going to school. In summer, they were kept home to help with tasks such as haymaking.

Bringing in the sheaves

In the 19th century, children were often kept at home to help with chores such as harvesting crops. Some schools adjusted their holidays, so that low attendance during busy farming periods would not mean a funding cut. In the 1880s and 1890s, schools in the Canterbury district of Waikākahi took their summer holidays either in January or in February, depending on whether the harvest was early or late.

In thinly populated areas, it was almost impossible for regional **education** boards to provide enough schools. Some wealthy farmers could send their children to boarding school, or employ live-in tutors and governesses. But many country children missed out on an **education** if they were not within walking or riding distance of a school.

Teaching and learning

At large town schools, classes were divided by age, but pupils at country schools were taught together in one or two classrooms. Parents expected them to gain basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, so that they could learn trades, handle accounts, measure land and crops, and take part in community activities.

But country pupils and teachers faced difficulties. Experienced teachers were not easily attracted to country schools. Teachers often shared their workload with pupil-teachers – older children who taught while still studying. And children who rarely attended or who were exhausted because they had to milk cows before coming to school were a challenge to teach.

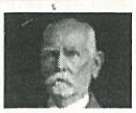
Rote learning, where children chanted facts until they had memorised them, was the norm in both town and country. The annual examination visit of the school inspector was an ordeal for teachers and pupils. Children had to pass the exam before moving up to the next class, and the humiliation of being kept back was intense.

Secondary **education**: district high schools

In country areas, secondary **education** was provided at a few district high schools. These were schools that had a small secondary department, as well as providing primary **education**. Secondary schooling cost money, so it was out of reach for most people.

In 1903, free secondary places at district high schools were offered to pupils who had passed the proficiency examination at the end of standard six (year eight), but most children still left school when they had reached that level, at about 12 years of age. In large struggling families it was important to contribute earnings or labour as soon as possible.

Biographies



Leonard Cockayne, 1855–1934

Caroline Freeman, 1855/1856?–1914

Henry Hill, 1849–1933

George Hogben, 1853–1920

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