

Statistics as to the number of uncertificated teachers in the Board's service are to be found in the annual report of the Board. Without wishing for a moment to minimize the gravity of the situation, we wish to state some facts which render the outlook less gloomy than the figures themselves seem to indicate. Of the 107 uncertificated teachers in the Board's service at the close of the year 1909, about 70 per cent. were in receipt of salaries averaging less than £100. It is almost unreasonable to expect to obtain certificated teachers for such positions as these. Again, it should be remembered that the 107 teachers referred to were not in sole charge of schools: about forty of them were employed as assistants under certificated teachers mostly of considerable experience, and were therefore, presumably, under competent supervision. Of the remainder (some sixty in number), fully half might be said to be doing work which could be described as satisfactory in the ordinary sense of the term; while of the rest, a fair number were showing considerable improvement in the management of their schools, and a corresponding number, because of the shortness of their tenure of office, could not be held responsible for the unsatisfactory condition in which their schools were found. Lastly, a fair proportion of our uncertificated teachers are young persons who have passed the D examination, but have not yet, on account of their youth, received actual classification.

Classes were organized during the year for the benefit of both certificated and uncertificated teachers. In the case of the former the instruction given was intended to popularize, to stimulate, and to render more efficient the teaching of certain manual and technical subjects, such as elementary physical measurements and elementary agriculture. In the case of the latter the courses adopted had as their objective the passing of the D examination. The zeal and ability displayed by the instructors are worthy of the highest commendation. In connection with this subject we may state that the results of the last certificate examination seem to be capable of two interpretations—one distinctly encouraging to your Board, the other somewhat disappointing. It is gratifying to find, on the one hand, that a large number of those who were but recently in your Board's service as probationers and as pupil-teachers attained either complete or partial success at the examination for the teacher's certificate, and that a fairly large proportion of these, not content with the ordinary qualification, aimed with some success at the C certificate. The regulation of the Board giving due weight to the literary qualifications of pupil-teacher candidates, promise of teaching ability being equal, has, no doubt, contributed largely to these desirable results. On the other hand, the number of adult uncertificated teachers in your Board's service who at the last examination reached certificated status was so small as to reduce only to a small extent the disproportionate number of uncertificated teachers at present in charge of schools in the district. These facts seem to indicate plainly that the time has now arrived when a vigorous policy of replacing uncertificated teachers by certificated can be carried out, in many cases at least, not only with justice, but also with success.

During the year several instances of negligence on the part of head teachers in the instruction of their pupil-teachers and probationers came to our knowledge. It appeared, for example, that a few pupil-teachers, who could ill afford the expense, were paying private tutors to prepare them for their professional examination. Every head teacher who has on his staff one or more pupil-teachers or probationers should clearly understand that he is held responsible by the Board for their efficient training and instruction; that he is required to provide systematic courses of work adapted to the needs of the trainees as future teachers, and as candidates for professional examinations; and that in his quarterly reports his certification as to the time spent in the tuition of pupil-teachers and probationers must refer only to the time during which they have been instructed by himself, an accredited assistant, or a teacher in one of the Board's training classes.

The practice of grouping classes, permitted under the regulations, is one of immense benefit to schools of the lower grades. By grouping, instead of six standard classes in reading, geography, history, &c., there may be only three; while, by the use of different Readers in alternate years, the same ground can be covered as formerly in instruction. Roughly speaking, there are three defects in grouping to be found in our schools. In some cases where it would be beneficial it is not employed at all. The consequence is that the time-table is unduly complicated and unworkable, the lessons short, scanty, and comparatively barren of results. The fear of parents is generally to blame for this. They cannot understand, for example, how a child who has been reading, we will say, Book 4 should, when promoted, be called upon to read Book 3. A moment's reflection should show them that the child has done the same amount of reading as in the ordinary course, but in a different order simply, and under conditions, moreover, much more conducive to sound progress than was formerly the case. It is the part of a discreet teacher to make such explanations to parents as will silence their clamour on this point. In the second place, unsuitable grouping is sometimes employed by teachers. The correct grouping in the subjects we have named is as follows: Group 1, Standards I and II; Group 2, Standards III and IV; Group 3, Standards V and VI. The children composing any one of these groups do not usually differ so materially in attainment as to make their instruction in common a matter of much difficulty. When, however, these classes are grouped otherwise, difficulties present themselves at once. And, in particular, when more than two classes in the subjects mentioned are grouped, it is evident that the difference of attainment between pupils of the lowest and those of the highest class is so great as to render the grouping indefensible. The most exasperating mistake in grouping, however, is the third, in which the teacher groups his classes in one manner one year and in another the following year. The reason generally alleged for this unmethodical proceeding is the smallness of some class in a particular year. Very slight consideration will show that in this way, for the sake of a mere temporary convenience, permanent injury is done to a certain proportion of the pupils. To sum up, grouping is beneficial in schools of lower grades; the classes should be grouped as shown above; and the grouping, once arranged, should not be altered unless in the most exceptional circumstances.