

The conference made a comparative study of the Native educational systems in the islands and countries bordering the Pacific. It is interesting to record the similarity of policy and principles upon which the various British dominions, colonies, and dependencies have based their respective Native educational systems. These are clearly expressed in the following quotation from *Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa* :—

“ Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations, and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life : adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of Native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service.”

I found a very considerable interest among the delegates in the work that is being done in our Native schools and in the Maori people themselves. More than one complete session was devoted to this subject, and the British delegates generally agreed that our system of Native education is in line with their opinion. It is interesting to note that, in contrast, the American policy was in the direction of making the Native races adopt American culture as quickly as possible.

The conference deepened my conviction that it is essential for administrators and teachers concerned with Native education to study and understand the culture of the people in whose interests they are employed.

5. ARTS AND CRAFTS.

Too many teachers regard handwork merely as so many useful skills which pupils should learn in order to become handy men and women. Instruction is accordingly emphasized at the expense of self-development. Handwork affords many opportunities for cultivating resourcefulness, adaptability, and initiative. Self reliance and the will to persevere and improve are two valuable traits of character which can be fostered through handwork. Pride in craftsmanship is essential as a means towards establishing genuine self-respect. Woodwork for boys, and sewing, knitting, and decorative needlework for girls form the chief part of the handwork programme. It is gratifying to find that several schools have established sewing-circles which are doing very good community work. In the primer classes the use of the various forms of handwork, to give reality to the other subjects, is generally recognized. Correlation with Nature study is general, but more could be done to utilize handwork activities as a means of expressing in material form the topics dealt with in morning talks and thus clarifying the mental pictures that have been aroused.

The refresher courses gave a marked stimulus to Maori handicrafts. Several schools have been able to co-opt Native instructors and instructresses, whose voluntary services have been much appreciated and have been the means of arousing interest as well as a more sympathetic attitude in the community generally. Maori carving is practised in a number of schools, while weaving, taniko, and tukutuku work frequently forms part of the handwork activities for girls. The adaptation of Maori design to pakeha crafts has been attempted in a few instances, and it is hoped that more of this will be done as the pupils gain proficiency in Maori designs.

Some very good work has been done in papier-mache, clay-modelling, and the use of waste rubber. Lino-cutting has been attempted, but the difficulty of obtaining material has prevented a general application of this type of work.

The ideal must again be stressed that the child should plan things for himself, learn to suggest methods of attack, and carry the work through to completion, mainly by his own efforts.

6. ÆSTHETIC ACTIVITIES.

A basic factor in the development of the young child is rhythm in some form or other, and music particularly is essential in the cultural development of the pupils. For these reasons the whole body should be used, and dancing, gesture, action songs, and other physical movements should be more extensively employed. The absence of pianos and gramophones in many schools curtails eurythmic work, but even in conjunction with singing more can be done to develop the physical sense of rhythm.

The teaching of singing by ear rather than from sight is the common practice. A few schools that have specialized in sight singing have obtained very good results. Part singing presents little difficulty in a Native school where Maori songs, arranged in harmonic form, are a conspicuous part of the programme, but the choice of English songs often leaves much to be desired. Singing should be bright, happy, and full of action, and songs of this nature are much to be preferred to the slow and sentimental types which are all too frequently chosen.

Drawing, like music, is not fully exploited in many schools. Spontaneous drawing needs encouragement in the upper classes, and living things and landscape drawing should receive more attention. In the primers the drawing of stories varies considerably, some reaching a very high standard. From the representational point of view drawing has been too closely confined to inanimate objects, mostly of the dull, utilitarian type. The cultural aspect of drawing is more in evidence as a result of the refresher courses, and where free design and colour work have been encouraged the results have been very satisfactory. Motivation in drawing is necessary, as the interest and consequential effort of the pupil depends largely upon the purpose of the drawing. This fact is frequently overlooked, but in those schools where artists' clubs have been instituted the quality of the work has improved considerably.