

Reports on Elementary Schools 1852 – 1882
By Matthew Arnold

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1852

He has 104 schools. 47 British, - 35 Wesleyan; 22 independent. ½ of the expense for these schools come from the students themselves.

3 – The cost excludes all of the very poor. As such, these schools have not the first claim to assistance from public funds.

4 – While cost makes the better folk come, it also leads to parents interfering with teachers.

5 – They object, for example, to using their children as monitors, which is good for advanced students but does harm not so advanced students.

Parent interference also interferes with school discipline. This is important as lower middle class students are not respectful.

6 – Also, those who pay less are taught less.

7 – So very able students are thrown back to the lower classes via neglect.

8 – Still, government funding helps.

British schools tend to charge less. In the country dissenting schools are more expensive. But, this is not necessarily the case in cities.

9 – In one town factory workers all pay money out of their salary and it goes to support local schools, a library, and medical attention.

10 – Welsh schools are generally on the British system. These are usually poor and dissenting. As such, it is very important that they go to National schools in England. The kids learn quickly, but needing to pick up English slows them down.

11 – While it is nice that the kids speak Welsh, “it must always be the desire of a Government to render its dominions, as far as possible, homogeneous, and to break down barriers to the freest intercourse between different parts of them.”

12 – MA would like to see Welsh students sent to study in English schools. Then they could stay and be employed for 2 – 3 years in English schools.

13 – British schools use the Lancaster method. The groups are often too large.

14 – And, the kids should stay with the same teacher and group through many subjects.

There should also be orphan schools (those for kids under 8).

15 – The Wesleyan schools are coed. The British not. He says coed is great. Men should teach the older grades, women the lower.

Pupil teachers need to be screened for ill health.

16 – The pupil teachers finish at 18. They often have information and no mental culture.

Students who know all of grammar, often can't write prose on any subject.

17 – Due to a lack of time, languages should not be stressed for pupil teachers. But study of the best English authors, and composition, would elevate and humanize.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1853

His estimate has risen. He is happy to see learning of grammar, geography, and English history. And the Wesleyan schools are reaching out to the poorer students better.

19 – Still the poorest are not getting educated. So he sees few of the masses in the schools. And, the paying folks often don't want their kids with the poorer kids.

20 – And schools wish to get more and more respectable.

In addition to the pay, the idea that the education at schools is not worth having pushes people away.

21 – If the fees are too low, it makes the poor suspicious of the quality. With excellent schools, the poor would make the necessary sacrifices to send their kids.

22 – Overall, high school fees do not, though, act as an attraction for the poor. And, recall, that what is high in one part of the nation is lower in another.

23 – But school will never become universal until it is compulsory.

And, whatever the textbook adopted, it should be uniformly used.

24 – Infant schools would help the infants, (their homes being mismanaged), and the upper schools.

People say feminine characteristics are inhibited at mixed schools. They are at all girls schools too.

25 – Needle work is also not well taught to girls in schools. The advantage to a family income of being able to sew is obvious.

27 – I kids show no skill at drawing, it is a waste to teach it to them, especially when time is so precious. Reading and writing should come before drawing.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1854

28 - The same inspector should see the same school year after year, to get a clearer picture of circumstances and difficulties.

The inspector's first duty is to say where grants should be refused. But, MA thinks general imperfections worth recording as well. The Inspector is also to encourage education, but how? By offering instructional advice and monetary help.

30 – The inspector must be true as well. He does not need to simply promote the system as successful.

32 – It is also hard to report the moral status of a school with a single day's visit.

34 – An ode to teachers and how hard they work.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1855

35 – The schools in London are inferior to the ones in the country, despite the advantages of being in the city.

36 – Manchester's schools are better than London's.

37 – It is probably the case that London is too stimulating. People are distracted by other things going on than the school.

38 – National schools have regular visits from clergy and this is an advantage. Clergy see themselves as fellow laborers, not supervisors over the teachers.

39 – In British schools, many ministers don't participate because committees have over ruled them.

40 – In Wesleyan schools he frequently meets ministers. But, this doesn't happen in London.

London schools also often have poor accommodations. Yet, open spaced to play, playgrounds, would benefit students.

41 – Open spaces humanize and civilize the neighborhood.

The Battersea plan divides classes down to 25 – 30 and each have a desk. The Wesleyan model is going towards a large gallery. They say it helps inculcate religion.

42 – Too much movement and too little desk time is harmful. 50 on floor, 50 on desks, and 50 on gallery.

43 – The scholar should have their own desk and be fixed to it.

44 – In a distant second, after the influence of the master, the organization of the school impacts the students' learning the most.

45 – He hears that students are learning more than they need. This is partially false. MA inspects middle class kids and he thinks this not over ambitious.

46 - There is ground for complaint where the schools profess to teach a skill do a bad job.

48 – Those who argue thus want teachers who are barely above the students in attainment. This does not work. Those who you give drudge training will do drudge's work in drudge's spirit. He challenges his supervisors to devise a teacher training curriculum.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1856

49 – The guidelines he sees for schools have so many exceptions as to be meaningless.

50 – There is so much variety in the system as it stands, it is hard to make generalizations.

51 – And each school should be left free to pursue its own fruits.

52 – Schools have improved since he started inspecting.

53 – The Battersea system is becoming widespread, but schools often suffer from a lack of desks.

54 – The benefit of the Battersea system is that it facilitates the establishment of uniform clearly defined classes.

55 – MA says it is better to have kids organized with less groping than disorganized with more.

57 – Finally, he'd like to acknowledge the improvement of London schools. He highlights the Jews' Free School.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1857

Sometimes schools don't know about grants, so don't get inspected. Sometimes, the managers object to money from the government.

59 – You cannot profitably inspect the later because good inspection requires friendliness between managers and inspectors.

There are other schools that are too remote for inspection.

60 – These schools have no funds. And, they often invite inspection with the hopes of getting aid.

61 – But the blame for the neglect often comes from their anti-government history. What has hitherto made a national system of government impossible?

62 – People worried state aid would kill off voluntary schools. So partial aid with payment from scholars was made the norm.

63 – Schools cannot afford teachers so principal teachers have been established paid at a lower rate.

64 – Above the principal teacher is the assistant teacher of the secondary school. But, highly trained students are often better than the class assistants.

65 – And the student teacher will learn a lot.

Someday many teachers will start their careers with a couple of years as an assistant.

66 – MA thinks this a good thing, though teacher training centers pooh – pooh it.

68 – And parents don't want their kids to be pupil – teachers as the boys can get paid more elsewhere. It is not so true with girls.

70 – School organization has gotten better in some schools as have the schools of London.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1858

Some teachers cannot be given too much freedom, they need supervision. Some need no management.

73 – Students should have access to affordable books.

Teachers should get higher certificates only if they prove merit.

Needlework is improving!

People are putting in pupils that shouldn't even be in infant schools.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1860

77 – No report last year due to France. He learned that pupil-teachers are good and that French schools have 100 pupils per cls!

78 – Teachers are not happy about restrictions on pupil teachers.

79 – While English facilities are good, the schools are dirty. French schools are clean.

80 – Poor London schools lack good light and good air. They are dirtier than we'd allow a government office.

81 – France has good textbooks, but no good reading books. Except the Bible, they have no humanizing instruction at all. If there are reading books, the authors are 3rd rate. These spoil his taste and he'll have no other in his life so he'll have bad taste forever. These teach to read better than science books and can turn some kids on to great literature.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1861

Some schools under his inspection have gotten cleaner. But the liberty of action given to managers reduces cleanliness.

84 – Also teacher pupils are getting worse at grammar.

85 – Some have been saying, get rid of grammar. But grammar can be measured and tested. And, more than arithmetic, it allows students touse their common sense.

86 – We should have universally agreed upon grammar books to help pupil – teachers.

Our exams too much emphasize the rational of grammar. With rules, will give him “the power of doing a thing right” – the true aim of an education of a boy. The logic will come later to those who it will.

88 – Rather than teach good taste directly, we should have good lit memorized. This would not be talked about, like so many lessons, but learned. This will help all but the rudest natures. And the mere process of gaining provides discipline. Their taste will also be formed by it.

89 – The year was distracted by education law changes.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1863

A new system of examinations came in by the Revised Code. MA did all the exams in his district himself to better report.

91 – The old inspection method promoted intellectual force, not as an agency for testing and promoting their discipline.

In the old way of testing, you asked a few students to read at random. Then you questioned the class with freedom on subjects of instruction. As you got to higher classes you included more subjects.

92 – With the new one, he asks each child to read. There is no free question time. So the inspector doesn’t see how the class behaves naturally and come to understand the full extent of what the class knows. And it is only reading, writing and arithmetic; grammar, geography, history are gone. The achievement by the higher boys, which is the intellectual life of the school, is omitted.

Before the inspector would be a beacon of intellectual achievement and all would work towards his standard. Now it’s the exam.

95 – Inspection is now painful and upleasant. Each of the 200 children checked 3 times.

Clergy manage National schools, but British and Wesleyan schools will not have such stimulus again.

97 – And, schools get punished for shy children with the new way.

98 – Scientific readers don’t work and pandering doesn’t either.]

100- The Scotts have worse grammar, but better imagination; long having had public education explains this.

101 – Government certificates should not be regarded as guarantors of literary attainment, just competence. Literary attainment must come elsewhere.

GENERAL REPORT FOR 1867

102 – Several years since the prior report, due to studying schools on the continent. The schools are getting worse.

103 – The deterioration is due to the school legislation of 1862 – payment by results. It has reduced money for schools and made teachers not regular salaried servants. This legislation also undermined pupil – teachers.

104 – The student teacher ratio is going up. And less people are applying to normal schools. And, the candidates are weaker.

Before was 5 years of indentured learning. Now, your salary is never safe.

105 – The work has also gotten more mechanical.

106 – Previously the teachers were honored servants of the government, now not.

107 – Pay used to be salary plus a bonus given after the inspector's exam results.

109 – Pupil teachers start apprenticeship at around 13 years old.

110 – Teachers should get stipends for teaching pupil-teachers.

111 – The standards of schools are not maintained by government action, but by demands of the parents, and intelligence. MA does not agree that testing has at least improved the worst schools.

112 – In these schools poor attendance and drop out make schools bad. When they come back after two months and fail, the teacher's pay is all that is impacted. But, rather than attack drop outs and attendance, it was easier to blame the teacher.

112 – When we rely more on mechanisms and less on intelligence all will naturally fall.

113 – Having the money depend on a mechanism, turns the schools into mechanisms. Religious teaching has dropped out due to testing concerns.

114 – And the failure rate in tests is rising. And the loss of language, geography and history means the loss of interest.

115 – More free play for teachers and inspectors is what is wanted.

And teachers are now preparing students to pass the tests without knowing the material.

117 – In Prussia compulsory education resulted from valuing learning. British folks prefer politics, station, business, pleasure, and money making. While Britain does not esteem education compulsory school laws will not work.

118 – So we must push the importance of education and get fees down. And, this does not mean free schools, but a small fee.

120 – Textbooks aimed at tests is big money. Districts should exercise control.

124 – Two letters given to show private schools are better.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1869

125 – MA inspected 25,000 children this year. 13,000 passed. He blamed payment by results.

127 – Payment by results creates illusionary results.

129- German schools work to give students real mental power.

132 – And to say payment by results works, you must have inspected schools for years prior to its implementation.

133 – Inspectors are not forbidden from making a wider examination. But, will the school care about it when the limited one is the one that brings grants?

135 – The payments by results aims teachers at the minimum. And, it tells the teacher achieving the minimum is good teaching. It makes teachers mechanical.

136 – 137 MA proposes an alternative grant divvying system. It would require trusting inspectors to know good form and style.

138 – Compulsory school laws would be violated because children need to work. Aim the laws at employers.

139 – British schools were instituted to promote the Bible. MA says Bible learning should be inspected.

140 – There was no Greek school in which Homer was not read. This should not fall to “politico-religious” difficulties.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1871

141 - The New Code of 1870 abolished denominational inspection and so Arnold now visited all Public Elementary schools.

142 – Extra subjects were also added, but done poorly.

143 – Religious instruction is now abandoned. Literature nearly is when they only aim at reading newspapers.

144 – Senior inspectors should be on school boards.

145 – Fixed salaries with gratuities during examination are coming back.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1872

147 – Students should be familiar with masterpieces so that they may be full, not mechanically, formed.

148 – Recitation (telling memorized passages) is the important subject and a good thing. Music instruction is now universal. It helps with perception. He also hopes for basic Latin to be introduced. It is the basis of so much written in Europe that it is practical.

149 – But it should have less time on grammar and no classic literature. Instead, the Latin Bible selections should be used. This Latin will be closer to the modern idiom.

150 - British and Wesleyan schools get lower middle students, the National schools poorer children.

151 – The British and Wesleyan schools have more self-government. National schools are created for lower class folk by the class above them.

The Church of England schools are the best as they give teachers independence.

152 – National schools should use the gallery more. Also, they use “dame-school methods.” The use of benches without desks leads to inattentiveness and lounging.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1874

154 – Attendance is a big problem. No law on this is recommended. Education is.

157 – MA looks at “letters” section of Normal school admission applications. These have had 5 years apprenticeship in elementary schools.

They are getting worse.

158 – 161 – Giving examples of poor test answers.

162 – We should give more weight to paraphrases as they give general intelligence results better than memorizing rules do.

We should study how to develop the general intelligence. Latin is again hoped for.

163 – And, he likes recitation. But the recitation should be turned into a literature lesson. Only classical poetry should be allowed. We should not fear uniformity. The idea that the French can tell what each boy in school is doing at any time is not bad if what they're doing is worthwhile.

165 – He encourages teachers to learn more. All should be made to go to London University.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1876

166 – Women should inspect needlework.

167 – But needlework should not take the place of other subjects, because they can get needlework at home.

168 – Grammar is an exercise in a child's wits. Much else is just memorization.

169 – He likes standards because they are basic. Left alone, the teachers would attempt too much. Higher level standards interfere with the teacher too much.

174 – MA hopes the Act of 1876 will create local school authorities. And, they should make attendance on examination day compulsory.

175 – He denounces plans to change the spelling of English words because they reflect Latin roots.

177 – speaking on the challenge of the science curriculum to liberal arts.

178 – People look at the lack of health in the poor and say this shows we need natural science. But these precepts don't hit the heart. We need morals. Here letters, poetry, and religion work best. The fruitful use of natural science itself depends on having effected for the whole man a rise in the standard of life.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1878

Attendance is up.

180 – The schools teach children between the ages of 4 and 13.

181 – So the most important word is "simplicity." We must aim at what they can comprehend.

His proposal for Natur-Kunde was a program to simplify the teaching of nature.

182 – The school where kids didn't know the word feeble shows we cannot assume knowledge.

Natur-Kunde is akin to natural philosophy

183 – Such science text books should not abstract the branches from each other, but combine them to make simple, yet full explanations. We need such textbooks.

185 – He thinks the right place for all the separate branches in detail is after school, past the age of 13. German also belongs there.

Latin is needed younger, especially for special scholars as they'll need it to go further in education. But French is good for all.

186 – It helps in business as well as lucidity and precision. And students should memorize, though rote is disparaged. Poetry is easiest, so 1 – 300 lines are common in his districts.

187 – Very little education impacts morals. So poetry memorization is good.

188 – We need to enlarge vocabulary and ideas.

189 – We should not be too stuck on education experts' generalities. We should do what works and be aware of unsuspected weaknesses in theories.

190 – Above all, the history of our own country is important.

191 – Reading is fundamental. It is more important than science specialties. And subjects should be taught in conjunction with sterling poetry and should contribute to the opening of the soul and imagination.

192 – The better a teacher tends to their own culture, the better they'll be able to share.

193 – MA would also urge the school board to simplify.

194 – We have more children than France. This may seem like a benefit, MA doubts it.

196 – England is spending double what France spends per child.

198 – MA wants schools to be made a public service, but our spending so much makes people shy of this. To do this school boards must simplify.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1880

200 – The memorization of lines, English literature, continues to be the most popular subject by far!

200 – 201 – Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty and of truth in alliance together, it suggests however indirectly, high and noble principles of action, and it inspires the emotion so helpful in making principles operative." It should be taught in lower standards.

202 – But the poem must have real beauty and be simple enough for the child to get it. They should also have short selections.

204 – He got poetry exercises established in his district. And, they must understand that which they are reciting!

205 – But poetry is still an extra subject.

207 – For the kids in elementary school, due to their upbringing, teaching Greek or Sanskrit makes us forget the pressing reality.

208 – Reading, writing, and arithmetic are the only truly required subjects for aid. But additional grants are available for any two of the following: geography, natural history, physical geography, natural philosophy, history, social economy, grammar, and (for girls) needlework.

Grants are also available for teaching two of any of the following: English Literature, mathematics, Latin, French, German, mechanics, animal physiology, physical geography, botany, and (for girls) domestic economy. Finally, a grant is offered for teaching music.

Three are necessary, 19 optional.

209 – If we want payment for results, perhaps for teaching a course, not individual attainment, MA suggests.

210 – Here he suggests what teachers should teach, regardless of grants: Reading, writing, arithmetic, poetry, grammar, geography, Nature-Kunde, and music. History is for the upper grades. And a few kids should get French and Latin rudiments and some geometry. Religious instruction is school by school.

These all deal with mental training.

211 – Remember, the code does not compel you, it only offers some money.

215 – Keep your eyes and ears open as to teaching techniques. Tentative, is good.

216 – Physical activity is a good thing too. It belongs in school.

GENERAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1882

218 – He likes voluntary schools and is glad they continue.

219 - They are for poor folks. And the teacher salaries are not high. Also volunteer schools have private and clerical managers that you'd think teachers would want to avoid.

And people still send their kids to them even though they are more expensive.

220 – These schools have monetary and moral benefits.

People respect these schools more because they have to pay for them.

To have expensive public schools for one class and free schools for another is disastrous.

Board schools have a fee, but they're less than that of the voluntary schools.

221 – He also doesn't like the giving away of free paper.

222 – Having an advocate in the personal manager is another voluntary school advantage.

222 – A boy of ten is free to go to work, and school part-time, if he has passed the 4th standard. This should be enforced.

223 – Evening schools help boys continue their schooling if it has been neglected. As the part – time rule for kids over 10 law gets enforced, the night schools might not survive. Larger schools, seen as a hub of learning, will survive and should be encouraged.

226 – MA wants teachers to work based on experience, not instructions from him.

And, he says this in the context of the New Codes passed. Fresh requirements keep being added. But remember that kids stay the same.

227 – MA is glad that the New Codes only give grants for subjects above the 4th. This prevents the students from being overwhelmed.

228 – Coherent learning in “dead languages” (though he dare not advocate it), is better than random facts. It is coherent, has meaning and adds up.

228 - Pleasurable activity and creation are important in reducing stresses. Drawing and singing are important here.

Poetry is important here.

People don't like memorization. But, if a kid can throw themselves into the poetry, it is creative.

229 – And memorizing bays can be made fun too. But, other subjects are more naturally creative and recreational.

230 – The last word of MA’s final report quotes Butler, “Of education information itself is really the least part.” It is the disposition to intimacy with the mind that matters.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS ON TRAINING COLLEGES - 1853

231 – There can be no doubt that of the zeal and diligence of the headmaster and students herein.

232 – But this school was founded to be religious and secular. With the religious uppermost. And religious character is to be the applicants shall be foremost in admissions.

233 – And the school was located near poverty to improve the moral character of the students.

234 – And the personal influence of the teacher is more important than the subject taught. So it is okay if they are not the most polished intellects in the world.

REPORT ON THE WESLEYAN TRAINING COLEGE, WESTMINISTER 1856

235 – They have 10 times the Sunday school students as day students.

236 – As long as denominational schools continue, he supports their religious mission. And if the infant schools play, this is good.

238 – They labor to make the memories of graduating students fond ones.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, 1855

239 – The good thing here is the scholars’ “active-mindedness.” The discipline is good, but it is “active-mindedness” that impresses MA.

240 – Industry and accuracy are perhaps eminently the qualities of man (and women too). The female students should attend the male classes.

The female teachers are good. But, grammar and arithmetic seem particularly to belong to the domain of the masculine intellect.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, 1858

Women now attend the male lectures. And, the students practice lessons they’ll later teach.

246 – Women would not sacrifice their intellectual training for needlework, especially as they have a large exam at the end of the year. Sewing is especially important in rural areas. But most will not teach in areas where sewing is as important as intellectual training. And the students where they teach won’t want it, so their domestic industrial training should be dropped.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUTION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, STOCKWELL BRANCH FOR SCHOOL MISTRESSES, 1861

Here there is much domestic work. And the lectures involve too little examination. This questioning method should be modeled.

250 – Music and Physical science courses awaken the young men. Music has a civilizing power. Perhaps it will be found the PE has these powers too at some point.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUTION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, STOCKWELL BRANCH FOR SCHOOL MISTRESSES, 1861

There is not enough questioning. The fault of our elementary schools in general is that the teacher tells the pupil too much, instead of forcing him to learn.

253 – The lessons aim to show the student teacher's own knowledge rather than his ability to teach. Rather than student teach to a class, perhaps they should just be seen instructing one student.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUTION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, STOCKWELL BRANCH FOR SCHOOL MISTRESSES, 1867

255 This school should have PE.

REPORT on the TRAINING INSTITUTION of the BRITISH and FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY, STOCKWELL BRANCH FOR SCHOOL MISTRESSES, 1868

This organization now allows government aid.

257 They are for all evangelicals of every stripe. In Germany there are Evangelicals and Catholic schools. That large grouping would work in England, if only. And with this division the schools' religion still has character.

REPORT ON THE WESLEYAN TRAINING COLLEGE at WESTMINSTER for 1868

Schools fail to awaken intellectual life. This may be because our teacher training is mechanical. The British and Wesleyan should learn from Germany.

Teaching of universal history and religion are needed. The religion being historical rather than dogmatic.

260 – No training schools, that MA knows of, teach universal history; religion is near gone too.

Religion, Catholic and Evangelical, should be taught heavily and not just a few facts.

262 – This should also happen in the elementary schools. This touches “chords of power.” This is the child’s only contact, sometimes, with metaphysics.

263 – Germany uses the Bible just as his father had recommended. Thus the Bible has become a part of the stock of the student’s mind, and he has them for life.

264 – All Protestant believers should unite under the term Evangelical. It is an allegiance not to a doctrine of Christianity, supposed to be already extracted, but to the adherent of the Bible and Christianity themselves.

265 - And you can be attached to a particular Church and confession and still recognize the broader Christian reality and this gives one the greatest largeness of mind.

REPORT ON THE TRAINING SCHOOLS OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY IN THE BOROUGH ROAD FOR SCHOOLMASTERS AND AT STOCKWELL FOR SCHOOL MISTRESSES; FOR THE YEAR 1870.

Gymnastics are now happening! On the continent, gym is not fun but as serious as any intellectual discipline.

267 - Grammar is also getting more space.

Society is behind increasing the teaching of physical sciences. Judicious observers know the deficiency of students is in humane letters. In fact, if not for recitation, one or two generations would be irredeemable.