Devon Village Schools and Reform in the 1920s

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***Abstract**: This paper seeks to explore the state of elementary schools in rural Devon; and of the schools examined, to what extent the measures under the Education Act of 1918 were implemented during the 1920s. It focuses on the 80 schools in Marjorie Wise's 'Study of Devon Village Schools' conducted during 1928 and 1929, and submitted to the Board of Education. Wise commented on the condition of the buildings, the facilities, the quality of the teaching and the curriculum provided. A further investigation is made of school records and local newspaper reports. These highlight the challenges faced by the head teachers and the initiatives many employed to overcome the difficulties faced. There were members of the Devon Education Committee who were opposed to reform, but despite these individuals, changes were made. The policies imposed by the Board of Education and implemented by the Education Committee resulted in improvements generally, although these occurred gradually and unevenly and the most potent force for change came from motivated head teachers.*

Keywords: rural education, teachers, school buildings, welfare, curriculum.

Introduction

The war effort exposed many deficiencies in the health, welfare, and education of the working classes. After the First World War, education became a matter of public concern in relation to demands for reconstruction.[1] The 1918 Education Act aimed at the establishment of 'a national

1 R. McKibbin, 'Education and Mobility' in *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1998) 206-7.

system of public education'. The school leaving age was raised to 14 but the ambitious plans envisaged by the framers were curtailed principally because of the economic depression of the 1920s. Under the Act, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were required to submit to the Board of Education schemes for the progressive development of education in public elementary schools which should include 'practical instruction suitable to the ages, abilities and requirements of the children' and advanced instruction 'for the older more intelligent children'.[2] The LEAs were responsible for the supply and training of teachers. They were required to make arrangements concerning the health and condition of children which included the provision of medical inspections and treatment. LEAs were required to ensure that suitable accommodation, facilities and personnel were provided in accordance with the Act. By March 1920 a draft scheme had been prepared by Devon Education Committee (DEC)[3] whose aim it was to implement this in the most economic and efficient way possible.

Marjorie Wise in her *English Village Schools* emphasised the importance of the Director of the LEA and the composition of the committee which she considered to be the determinant of progress in education, and whilst there were progressives, there were also re-actives.[4] Likewise, members of the DEC held differing views about the value of education. There were those who thought it vital to introduce education reforms and others who were alarmed at the expanding costs involved. For example, at a meeting of the DEC in October 1923 a lengthy discussion took place on a proposal to appoint a temporary additional teacher in domestic subjects. Miss Lazenby strongly supported the appointment whereas Mr T. Batting opposed any increase of these teachers contending that the proper place to teach girls domestic science was in the home, under the guidance of the mothers. Ultimately, the resolution was carried. [5]

2 Education Act 1918, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/8-9/39
3 Devon County Council *Minutes,* 11 March 1920, Devon Heritage Centre.
4 M. Wise, *English Village Schools*, (London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf, Hogarth Press, 1931) 144.
5 'Domestic Teaching', *Western Times,* 5 October 1923, 6.

Wise was an educationist and administrator at Dartington Hall in South Devon founded by the Elmhirsts as an experimental school. They set up a host of educational projects and Wise's principal objective was to ascertain which teachers in the schools she visited would benefit from a short course at Dartington in rural science, run for teachers for the Board of Education.[6] She visited non-provided schools (church schools) and provided schools (council schools) throughout the county, most of which were in rural settings, and reported her findings to the Board of Education. Although her study offers only a random sample, it does provide a snapshot of the state of the schools. Wise identified those schools where progress was evident but on the other hand, her report shows that many of the deficiencies revealed in Pamela Horn's extensive investigation of education in rural England up to 1914 still existed well into the 1920s.[7] Her focus was on the conditions in which children were taught, the quality of the teachers, and the facilities available. This paper aims to develop these themes by examining school log books and local newspaper reports from the early 1920s to the end of the decade in order to chart any progress made in the implementation of the provisions of the 1918 Education Act.

School Buildings

At a meeting of DEC in November 1920, the subject of dilapidated schools was discussed. The Secretary pointed out that the main concern was the condition of the church schools as the 'Council schools were fairly well kept'.[8] The following year, the matter was discussed again in relation to the health of both staff and pupils. Mr Pierce suggested a lack of interest by the local managers to be partly responsible for the problem.[9] Then In 1922, Dr G. Adkins, County Schools' Medical Officer, in his annual report emphasised the unsatisfactory condition of many of the church school

6 M. Wise, *Survey of Devon Village Schools,* 1928-29, Devon Heritage Centre T/AE/2/B.
7 P. Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914,* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978).
8 'Devon's C3 Children', *Western Morning News,* 5 November 1920, 7.
9 'Devon Education', *Western Times,* 6 May 1921, 6.

buildings in relation to ventilation, heating, lighting, playgrounds, water supply and cloakrooms.[10]

An example of the condition of some church schools is recorded in the log book of Cornworthy School where a first group boy while performing exercises put his foot through the floor which was rotten in many places.[11] Some council schools were also in need of repair. In October 1921, a large patch of plaster fell from the ceiling in the main room at Stoke Gabriel School; fortunately, it occurred on a Saturday, when no pupils were in attendance,[12]

Wise described school rooms as dark, poorly lit, usually with high, narrow windows facing North. Many buildings were old, erected in the mid to late nineteenth century when high windows were the norm and the focus on education was very different to that of the early twentieth century. Wise identified the difficulties which both teachers and children were experiencing. She noted that the children at one school were doing craft work in a 'perfectly terrible room'. In the afternoon, those children sitting on the opposite side of the room to the window could hardly see the colours they were using when making mosaics.

Heating was problematical in many schools. The stoves installed failed to provide enough heat in winter. Teachers complained that the temperature at times would be only 30 degrees Fahrenheit and children had difficulty in holding their pens. Wise noted the smell of damp on entry to some schools caused by wet clothing and boots drying out. Given that children walked through rain and snow along rough, muddy roads to get to school in winter, the lack of facilities to dry wet clothes was a serious concern. Georgeham Church School, however, had been reconstructed with a central heating system which extended to the cloakroom so that wet clothes could be dried.

In some small schools, one large room was divided into two, with or without a curtain to divide the classes or one big room with a woodwork or science bench placed in one end. Often a monitress would teach the infants in one end of a room whilst the head teacher took the older

10 'Devon Schools', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* 4 April 1922, 10.
11 Cornworthy School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 1276C/EFL/1
12 Stoke Gabriel School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 2009C/EFL/3.

scholars in the other end. At Brixton Church School, the head teacher explained to Wise how difficult it was to teach four standards in his own room, and at Hatherleigh Council School, there were 65 infants in the first grade, all in one room. At Bovey Tracey Council School, the size of the rooms limited the number of pupils gaining upward mobility by having to wait for a space before being moved to the higher class.[13]

A water supply was necessary to ensure a clean and healthy environment. Water was often taken from a nearby well and carried in buckets to flush the foul waste from the lavatories but in one school, the lavatories were located over a running stream which would sometimes be reduced to a trickle. At a meeting of DEC in July 1921, Dr Mackenzie highlighted the need for a water supply in every school as many schools were without.[14]

Caretakers played an important role in maintaining hygienic conditions in the schools. They were poorly paid and some failed to carry out their duties conscientiously. Consequently, floors were left dirty and in several schools, the pail lavatories were only emptied once a week. It was not easy work. At Bondleigh Council School, Wise was informed that the female caretaker emptied the foul water from the lavatories over a six-foot wall, before digging in the waste. Caretakers were also responsible for lighting the school fires. If they arrived late in the morning, the teachers would have to chop the firewood and lay the fires resulting in smoky, cold classrooms.

One measure to improve the physical welfare of the children was to promote physical training. This usually took place in the playground but these were not always suitable since they were 'quarries in the summer and swamps in the winter'.[15] The weather conditions therefore determined whether physical training could take place and where there was no playground, teachers had to rely on other locations such as a nearby farmer's field.

13 Bovey Tracey School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 8790C/EFL/3.
14 'Health of Children', *Western Times,* 22 July 1921, 12.
15 'Insanitary Devon Schools', *Western Morning News*, 7 April 1922, 3.

In April 1929 at a meeting of the DEC, proposals for the restructuring of rural schools in accordance with the Hadow Report were discussed. Children over the age of 11 from certain junior schools would be placed in central senior schools to be built in urban areas. Members were concerned that by sending rural children to town schools this could lead to rural depopulation and denude the land of labour. The cost of transporting the children to the central schools was also a matter of concern. The final resolve was summed up by the columnist of the Western Times who wrote, 'the attitude to the Hadow Scheme might be said to be one of cautious friendliness rather than blind approval'.[16]

Teachers and Administration

Wise learnt that whereas some school managers were very supportive, others rarely visited the schools and showed little interest in either the school buildings or the scholars' work. Church school managers struggled to acquire the funds required for repairs or extensions to the buildings. However, at Beer Church School the necessary funds were obtained from various sources including church collections. The fact that the head teacher was a church warden and both he and the vicar were school trustees, might be a reflection of their total commitment to the reconditioning and extension of the building.[17]

Managers were also involved in the appointment of staff. Given that nearly half of the money spent on education came out of the rates, the focus was often one of economy. Therefore, when a vacancy occurred at Bovey Tracey Council School, the managers suggested that the position be offered to a supply teacher working at the school since her salary was considerably lower than that required by any of the applicants.[18]

The support of the gentry in the management of schools was diminishing as many landowners decided to break-up their estates and put their land on the market. However, some

16 'Future of Rural Schools', *Western Times,* 5 April 1929, 8.
17 Beer School *Managers' Minute Book*, Devon Heritage Centre 2269C/EFM/1.
18 Bovey Tracey School *Managers' Minute Book*, Devon Heritage Centre 8790C/EFM/1/1.

landowners retained their interest. School logbooks show that the Acland family of Killerton took a keen interest in Broadclyst Church School. At Calverleigh Church School, Mrs Chichester of Calverleigh Court trained the children for the Christmas concert and Major Chichester gave prizes for good attendance, and in 1926, Mrs Giles, wife of the Chairman of managers of Sherford Council School invited some of the children to Sherford Down to listen to a lecture on 'The Fox'.

The table below shows the difference in teachers' qualifications in the years 1928-29. 'Certificated' teachers had attended a teacher-training college and passed examinations, 'uncertificated' teachers had attended a teacher-training college for a short period without graduating and 'supplementary' teachers had no educational qualifications. The table reveals that teachers in Devon held lower qualifications than the England and Wales average, and those in the village schools were even less well qualified.[19]

Place	*Certificated*	*Uncertificated*	*Supplementary*
England & Wales	73.03%	22.0%	4.97%
Devon	51.56%	28.14%	20.3%
Devon Villages	43%	25.6%	31.4%

The larger schools which had over 100 children on the rolls were usually led by male certificated head teachers, assisted by certificated teachers or sometimes by uncertificated teachers, with supplementary teachers for the infants. The head teacher's salary was dependent upon the size of the school in which he or she taught.[20] Most small schools had two teachers; the head teacher who was generally certificated, with a supplementary teacher or monitress who taught the infants.

Caitlin Adams, *Rural Education and Reform between the W*ars explains, 'It was a striking feature of rural schools that they used a far higher percentage of 'uncertificated' and

19M. Wise*, English Village Schools*, 41; *List of Teachers:: Public Elementary Schools 1926* (Exeter: Bearne Brothers, 1926)
20 Wise, *Survey of Devon Village Schools*.

'supplementary' teachers than town schools.[21] Commentators suggested that supplementary teachers were diluting the teaching efficiency of the nation.[22] Wise was of the view that some supplementary teachers were very poor teachers; they showed little interest in their schools and were simply filling in time prior to getting married. The result was that in such cases, their pupils were given a poor grounding which had an adverse effect on their progress throughout. However, supplementary teachers were poorly paid females who were not always in a position to undertake teacher training. Wise identified one teacher who she described as 'very good'.

She was a former modern school pupil who had won a scholarship to a college but was unable to take up the place for financial reasons. As an acting supplementary teacher, she received £80 per year, out of which four pounds were taken for superannuation. All that remained each week after payment of her board, clothes and other necessities was about two shillings.[23]

Wise found a wide variation in teachers' abilities and enthusiasm. She commented that 'a great many of the village teachers go in the same way year after year teaching children very little except not to talk'.[24] In a few schools she considered the discipline to be very lax. Conversely, some head teachers supervised the work of their assistants and analysed the results of the children's terminal examinations.

The books, materials, and equipment available to teachers also varied considerably. Small schools tended to be those which lacked facilities and equipment most of all. On commencing her duties in May 1921, the head teacher at Meeth Church School wrote in the logbook 'My chief handicap in commencing work is that there is such an inadequate supply of materials, stationery and apparatus'.[25] But teachers were very often creative and innovative. At Broadclyst Church School the head-teacher made a rain gauge from a jam jar and a tin so that the boys could record

21 C. Adams, 'Rural education and reform between the wars' in *The English Countryside between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline?* Ed., P. Brassley, J. Burchardt, and L. Thompson: (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006) 39.
22'Problems of Education', *Western Morning News* 14 April 1925, 5.
23 Wise, *Survey of Devon Village Schools*
24 *Idem*
25 Meeth School *Logbook,* Devon Heritage Centre 699C/EFL/1

the weather; and at Loxbeare Church School the older children made a doll's house, furniture, and bedclothes for use in the infant classes. Teachers decorated the dreary walls with pictures, wall charts, and applied stencils drawn from their own designs.

Head teachers even contributed to the schools' funds by organising concerts. The head teacher at Harbertonford Council School provided a gramophone and a £60 piano and at Frithelstock Church School the head-teacher collected £200 to alter the building. The head teacher at Georgeham Church School raised money towards the restructuring of the school by holding a fete.

Wise noted the collaboration between the local school and the community. Not only was the school used as the community hall, but head teachers were also expected to play a role outside school. At Hartland Council School, 75% of the children were farm labourers' children and the head teacher helped the community by writing letters and wills. in 1924, DEC appointed a librarian under the Rural Libraries Scheme and local centres were established.[26] The head teacher of Bridestowe Church School was one of a number of teachers who acted as librarian for the County Library based in schools.[27]

Many schools hosted an open day for parents and friends. An exhibition was held at Halberton Church School in 1928 when specimens of work including drawing, knitting, needlework, handwriting, gardening, and woodwork were on view. Teachers also trained the pupils in readiness for music festivals. Teachers encouraged the children to enter their exhibits in local shows. Children from Loxbeare Church School had entries in the Nature Study class at the Tiverton Agricultural Show.[28] Beer Church School was successful in the Devon Annual Music Competition,[29] and Membury Council School entered competitors in a children's verse competition established to encourage children to study the art of poetry.[30]

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26 Devon County Council *Minutes*, 19 June 1924.
27 'News of the Week', *Western Times*, 31 July 1925, 9.
28 Loxbeare School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 690C/EFL/1.
29 Beer School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 2269C/EFL

30 'Children's Verse Competition', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14 March 1922, 5.

The normal rhythm of the school was often disrupted when teachers were absent through illness and epidemics. As Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) remarked on Bovey Tracey Council School in 1920,

> The curriculum is a full one and though in some respects, the former high standard of efficiency has not perhaps been fully maintained yet considering the recent closures for a pandemic and the absence of the head teacher for eight months, it is much to the credit of the staff that it has dropped so little.[31]

Administrative difficulties arose for the head teachers when their assistants were absent and no supply teacher was available. This was particularly evident in some small schools where one teacher would have to cover the whole school. In a number of schools, there was a regular turnover of staff, particularly of supplementary teachers.

Another problem to plague village schools was the irregularity of attendance of scholars. Children were excluded from school with Infectious diseases such as ringworm. In 1920, HMI reporting on the Stoke Gabriel Council School stated 'On medical grounds an unusually large proportion of the children have been excluded from this school for long periods, extending in some cases to two years', and the head teacher wrote 'it is impossible to do any sound teaching when children are absent such a great deal'.[32] Later in the decade in January 1928, an entry in the logbook of West Coombe Council School, Buckfastleigh recorded that 70% of the children were absent through infectious diseases. There were numerous other reasons for absenteeism; child minding, potato picking and even beating for the local squire's pheasant shoot.[33]

Curriculum

The head teachers had certain flexibility in relation to the curriculum particularly when the Board of Education loosened some of the restrictions around elementary education. Reading, writing, and

31 Bovey Tracey School *Logbook.*
32 Stoke Gabriel School *Logbook.*
33 West Coombe School *Logbook,* Devon Heritage Centre 643C/EAL/1.

arithmetic were the traditional core subjects and the remainder was largely a matter for the head teacher. Consequently, some schools developed a diverse curriculum and others provided a very narrow one. Of the latter, Wise commented on one head teacher who she thought 'felt satisfied if she taught them [the pupils] to read, write and do sums before they left'.[34]

Teachers in the larger schools were usually better qualified than those in small schools and therefore able to teach the more advanced subjects such as at Woolbrook Council School, Sidmouth where the children studied elementary science and quite advanced mathematics, but as Wise pointed out, this was not a rural school in the true sense of the meaning. On the other hand, teachers in the smaller rural schools took advantage of the environs. The head teacher of Twitchen Church School, which was a moorland school, encouraged the children to produce 'Exmoor Books' in which they entered natural history, geography, geology, history and folk legends. At Membury Council School the local landowner offered the head teacher part of the nearby River Yarty to give swimming lessons to the boys of the first class.[35]

Instruction in religious knowledge was still an important component of every school's timetable even though its emphasis had diminished. In church schools, especially when the vicar was chairman of the managers, a greater religious character was present. At many church schools, the incumbent would take scripture lessons and the church choir master would give singing lessons. Pupils were often part of the church choir and at Loxbeare Church School, they entered the Bishop Phillpott's Prayer Book Prize examination each year.[36]

Although the importance of practical lessons was not an entirely new departure from earlier legislation, the curriculum was broadened throughout the County. The DEC appointed organisers and instructors to support head teachers in establishing courses in domestic science, handicrafts, gardening, agriculture, and physical training. Although these subjects were grant aided, the

34 Wise, *Survey of Devon Village Schools*
35 *Ibid.*
36 Loxbeare School *Logbook.*

practicalities could be difficult to achieve in many schools where facilities could not be provided in situ. Hence, courses were either established by the DEC organiser at a central hub or alternatively at a local venue.

At Stoke Canon Church School, the Jubilee Hall was hired for a cookery course. The cost of the hire and the wages of the caretaker were borne by DEC who also provided a cooking stove and other necessary gear. The ground surrounding the hall was rented for the gardening class.[37] Where no suitable alternative could be found, as at Fogginton, Walkhampton Council School, Wise found the older girls were making marrow jam in the head teacher's house and at Landscove Church School, Staverton, the children helped with the head teacher's chickens and pigs in order to learn about agriculture.

In 1925 a circular was produced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Board of Education which dealt with stimulating the interest of young persons in agricultural education, followed by a joint memorandum in 1927 which suggested the curriculum to be followed. [38] At a meeting of the joint body of representatives of the Agricultural and Education Committees in June 1929, approval was given to a scheme to provide children over the age of 11 with special instruction in dairying and poultry keeping and certain schools were chosen throughout the County to take advantage of the scheme including Kentisbeare Church School and Broadclyst Church School.[39] Children employed a mixture of mathematics, mensuration, woodwork, elementary biology and nutrition in order to house, rear and sell the products.[40] Wise noted that the head teacher of Membury Council School had arranged for the older children to take part in the poultry course and the boys from Morchard Bishop Church School kept a flock of fowl working under the County Organiser.

37 Stoke Canon School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 76/43/1/4.
38 L. Thompson, 'Agricultural education in the interwar years' in *The English Countryside,* 61-62.
39 'Devon Education', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette,* 28 June 1929, 9.
40 Thompson, *The English Countryside,* 66.

The Board of Education's pamphlet 'Rural Education' recommended that teachers in rural areas develop a 'rural bias' to all subjects in the curriculum.[41] HMI wrote in his report on the Kentisbeare Church School, 'The headmaster has given a rural bias to the instruction. It is hoped to introduce shortly experimental science dealing with soil and plant culture'.[42] Teachers made use of their natural resources. At Leusdon Council School, Widecombe, a school situated on Dartmoor, the children were taught hand weaving and the preparation of dyes from local plants.[43] Gardening was considered a way to further the children's knowledge of their natural surroundings and by 1929, the total number of school gardens established in the county was 160.[44]

With the expansion of the curriculum providing a variety of both academic and practical subjects, short teacher training courses were arranged. Courses of a practical nature were arranged at various local centres including Dartington.[45] Special courses of an academic nature were offered at Oxford and Cambridge Universities and refresher courses were held at the University College of the South West at Exeter. Wise found that although teachers were keen to take up the offer of a course, they were not always in a position to do so because of the lack of supply teachers to cover their absence. Also, those from isolated villages who had to rely upon bus services could not always make the necessary travel arrangements.

Developments

By 1929 it would appear that there were schools where managers or teachers resisted change but logbooks reveal that in general, the quality of education according to HMIs had improved. HMI reporting on Cornworthy Church School in 1923 referred to the backward and unsatisfactory condition of the school in 1920 but by 1928 a marked improvement was evident. He wrote, 'The

41 A. Kirke. *Education in Interwar Rural England: Community, Schooling and Voluntarism*, 109 https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1545142/Thesis accessed 19 August 2020.
42 Kentisbeare School *Logbook,* Devon Heritage Centre 4169C/EFL/3
43 Leusdon School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 769C/EAL/3.
44 'Farm Life and Work', *Western Times*, 13 September 1929, 15.
45 Devon County Council *Minutes*, 15 March 1928.

headmistress and her assistant spare no effort to make themselves efficient. They have attended classes and courses arranged for teachers… In attainments, the scholars reached a fair standard at the last examination for scholarships, two were gained'.[46]

An expansion of the curriculum coupled with teacher training clearly did produce good results in many schools. Woolbrook Council School achieved a high level of achievement and Wise noted that some of the smaller schools also had good results such as Bondleigh Council School and Parracombe Church School where pupils won scholarships to secondary schools. In 1925 Halberton Church School was identified by HMI to be amongst the best schools in the County in the instruction and application of the practical subjects.[47]

Dr Adkins stated in his report to DEC in 1929 that many improvements had been carried out to improve the environment of the children. Alterations, repairs and reconstruction of the school buildings had been effected.[48] The DEC had also provided funding for internal repairs and renovations to some church schools such as Cornworthy Church School.[49] The Exeter Diocesan Council reported steady progress in the repair and improvement of church school buildings and a movement towards the re-organisation of the schools.[50] With a better school environment, physical activities, and regular health checks and treatment, by 1927 a marked improvement was evident in the children's health.[51]

In most schools the curriculum was expanded to include practical lessons. The teaching of needlework and woodwork had generally improved by 1930.[52] Subjects with a rural bias were introduced and teachers used gardening lessons as a basis for elementary agricultural teaching. By relating the practical aspect of the subject with its scientific principles, teachers moved across traditional disciplinary boundaries. However, as Wise stated 'the thing that one misses in both

46 Cornworthy School *Logbook,* Devon Heritage Centre 1276C/EFL/1.
47 Halberton School *Logbook*, Devon Heritage Centre 76/27/1/3.
48 'Health in Devon', *Western Times*, 24 May 1929, 16.
49 Devon County Council *Minutes*, 26 September 1929.
50 'Education Problems', *Western Morning News,* 21 May 1928, 5.
51 'Devon Health Services', *Western Morning News,* 29 December 1927, 2.
52 Wise, *English Village Schools,* 73.

cookery and laundry and cleaning work is the definite and close relation with science which many of the teachers of the boys manage to get with gardening work'.[53]

Conclusion

At the start of the 1920s, the various bodies associated with village schools in this study had a mammoth task to promulgate the reforms required by the Board of Education. By the end of the decade, some progress had been made but this was gradual and uneven. Some schools managed to embrace change in spite of lack of funding. A large number of defects was still to be found in many school buildings although the most urgent building repairs and extensions had been undertaken. Minor improvements mainly to the interior of the buildings had been carried out. The School Health Service and physical training helped to promote a healthy generation. The support given to head teachers by the DEC together with the Board of Education brought about reforms in school curricula, teacher training and styles of instruction. Most head teachers made the best of the resources available to them and overcame a variety of challenges.

In the majority of the schools, the curriculum had begun to adapt to the changing times. The education which the schools provided had a closer relationship with the pupils' potential future occupations and furnished them with an awareness of the wider world beyond the boundaries of their own parish. Schools which had made little or no progress were in the minority. According to reports of the HMIs, the quality of the education provided had improved in the main.

From the sample of schools investigated, it is revealed that the most potent force for change came from motivated head teachers supported by the DEC. This case study offers a contribution towards the ongoing debate on rural education in the interwar years.

53 *Ibid*., 76.