

1905

BEDFORD COLLEGE FOR WOMEN.

REPORT OF HYGIENE SUB-COMMITTEE OF BOARD OF EDUCATION.

Reference.

That the Sub-Committee be requested to frame a course of instruction in Scientific Hygiene which it is suggested should give the Students the option of an eighteen months' course without examination or a twelve months' course for such as have an elementary knowledge of science, and that the scheme thus drawn up be considered by the Board of Education. That it be an instruction to the Committee to bear in mind that the course should be framed mainly for students wishing to take the teaching of Hygiene; but it should meet the requirements of students intending to become inspectors, as far as possible; and the sociological side of the subject should be kept especially in view. That the Committee be empowered to add to their number and to take such evidence as they may see fit.

Mrs. Woodhouse was unable to serve on the sub-committee. Miss Ravenhill was only able to be present once, but has kindly given constant advice.

The sub-committee wish in the first place to state that the reference to them is narrow; that it suggests the revision of the present course in order to meet the requirements of teachers and contemplate the provision of one course only to meet the requirements of 2 classes of Students (a) teachers, (b) those preparing for work as Inspectors and other administrative work. It was also urged in the preliminary discussion of the former sub-committee that there was not much evidence of demand on the part of class (b) while much on the part of class (a). The sub-committee considered that any recommendations as to changes in the Hygiene Department, either for the extension or merely for the revision of its work, would be of little value unless preceded by an enquiry into the present and the probable future demand for College teaching for the two purposes indicated. They have therefore disregarded the limitation of the reference and have made investigations as wide and as thorough as possible.

Demand for Courses.

1. They desire first to record their opinion that the demand for a course of training for Women Inspectors is increasing, not decreasing. This opinion is based upon (i) public statements and other evidence of Medical Officers of Health e.g. an address by Dr. Dudfield of Kensington on Women's place in Sanitary Administration, (ii) upon the evidence of the increase in the number of valuable appointments obtained by College Students; and the increase in the number of appointments advertised, (iii) the need for appointing Women to inspect under the Midwives' Act, and the tendency, out of London, to combine with this work the work of Sanitary Inspecting. (iv) the attention being paid by Public Authorities to the care of infants.

They consider therefore that there is as great need as hitherto for a Course on the present lines.

Whether in method or detail this course could be improved is a matter which might be considered, but it is required substantially as it stands, i.e. Scientific Hygiene taught with a special application to the administrative aspects of Public Health work.

The Committee wish to remark that the weakness of the students at present in the Hygiene Class is due to poor general education, or lack of previous qualification, and they think it is desirable to require some standard of general and scientific knowledge as a condition for entrance.

2. The evidence for any existing demand for a Course specially suited for teachers is extremely small. A few Students, often the least well qualified, who apply for admission to the Hygiene Department each session aim at becoming teachers rather than Inspectors. As teachers (with an occasional rare exception) the work subsequently open to them is that of giving popular lectures under County Councils, usually to adult classes (i.e. these women with no sufficient general knowledge qualifications, and with no professional qualifications, have no regular standing within the teaching profession).

So far there has been little or no demand on the part of women with high qualifications for such a course.

The sub-committee therefore found it necessary to survey the probable demand, based upon a careful consideration of the place which the teaching of Hygiene could take in Schools and Training Colleges of all kinds, and upon the evidence of pressure of public opinion now brought to bear upon Educational authorities, Central and Local, to secure a better place in all Teaching Institutions for the study of the Laws of Health. The teaching in Schools is, at present, scarce, scrappy, and often entirely un-educational, the supply of teachers able to teach the subject adequately is very insufficient, almost non-existent; the want is met to some extent by the introduction of peripatetic lecturers, or sometimes by the medical man.

Public opinion has been aroused of late by the interest created by the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, and it has found expression in various ways:

e.g. The petition to the Board of Education of 15,000 Medical practitioners and the subsequent activity of the profession.

The arrangement for an International Conference on School Hygiene to be held in London 1906.

The holding of Conferences on the same subject in 1905 by the Royal Sanitary Institute, and the Royal Institute of Public Health.

The activity among Temperance advocates in this direction.

The activity of the Board of Education in the prominence given to Hygiene matters in regulations for Training Colleges and Schools.

The appointment by the Board of Women Inspectors.

The opinions expressed and action being taken by the Incorporated Society of Medical Officers of Health.

All Educationalists are agreed in desiring to see a better place assigned to the study of, and the teaching of the Laws of Health. In order to get this better teaching there appears to be a need for providing for various classes of Teachers:

1. Every Head or Assistant Teacher already engaged in work should have an opportunity of hearing more than she already knows of the Laws of Health, and learn how to conduct her School as a whole, or her Class teaching, so as to give practical application to this better knowledge.

To this end Evening or Saturday Morning Classes, are needed.

2. Every teacher, Elementary or Secondary, should have brought to her attention while training the important relation of an understanding of the Laws of Health to all educational work.

To this end Training Colleges should be supplied with expert teachers in Hygiene.

It may be noted that in some Elementary Training Colleges Students who are not preparing for degrees might usefully be given fuller instruction in Hygiene than is generally possible.

It may also be noted that the curricula laid down by University Authorities for Students in Secondary Training Colleges is so extensive and the work so exacting, that little opportunity is left for more than a cursory study of Hygiene. It is hardly possible to do more than suggest to the Student the importance of the subject, and to make her realise its close connection with Educational problems. It is however felt that in view of the importance of the subject, as a basis of all educational work, curricula should be so revised as to allow of a larger place being given to it. Liverpool University is setting a good example in this direction.

3. It would seem that in every School of any size, Elementary or Secondary, there should be a place for special teachers equipped with a thorough scientific and practical knowledge of the Laws of Health, who would give either direct teaching in the subject, or definitely teach it through the medium of Nature Study, Elementary Science or Domestic Economy (which it is desirable should be based upon its fundamental Sciences, and treated educationally when introduced as a School subject).

To this end Students with good knowledge and professional qualifications are needed, who should study the subject matter and application of Hygiene with a view to such teaching; and a thorough Course of Instruction for such a purpose should be available.

4. Every Training College, Elementary, Secondary and Domestic, should have expert Teachers, with good knowledge and professional qualifications, able to impress on all Students passing through those Colleges the value of their future teaching as a means of spreading an intelligent understanding of the Laws of Health, and to enable their Students who are to become Teachers of Science or Domestic Economy, to make their future teaching practically available to this end.

To this end again there is need as under (3) to provide a thorough course for the training of the expert teacher.

5. There is a movement in some of the newer Universities to have Hygiene included as part of a Degree Course. This may ultimately be adopted by the University of London under regulations for the proposed new Modern Degree.

Thus in the future Hygiene may have to be provided for as part of a Degree Course.

The sub-committee are of opinion (a) that as regards the needs of Class I. (teachers already teaching) the proposal of the College to offer Courses in Hygiene, under the Scheme for providing Saturday Morning Courses which the London Education Committee wishes to inaugurate next October, is very opportune, and should be adhered to.

(b) that as regards Class 2 (teachers in training,) the College might possibly improve if not increase its present Course of School Hygiene, if any change in curriculum should be made.

(c) that as regards Classes 3 and 4 (the expert teachers), these are the Students for whom, if forthcoming, it appears to be the function of a University College to provide.

It is obvious that if Hygiene is to take first rank among School subjects the Teachers of it must take first rank among their professional colleagues, i.e. a low standard of professional qualification in Teachers of Hygiene will tend to discredit their position, and consequently that of the subject which they represent.

Such a review of the whole subject suggests the conclusion that the College should if possible provide an Advanced Course for Teachers. The sub-committee have arrived at this conclusion after obtaining advice on the whole subject from many experts. They also have endeavoured to obtain the views of experts as to the character of the Course suitable for the Expert Teacher.

By the kindness of the University they were able, at the conclusion of the Royal Sanitary Institute's Conference on School Hygiene, to hold a private Conference, Feb. 14th., at which were present: Professor Finlay of Manchester, Prof. Edgar of St. Andrews, Mrs. Eddison of the West Riding, Miss Ravenhill, Miss Mowbray of Winchester, Dr. Kerr, Schools Medical Officer to the London County Council, Dr. R.D. Roberts and Dr. Kimmins; the two latter making practical suggestions of great value should the College establish a Course.

The sub-committee feel however that enough has not yet been done to obtain the opinions of, or to arouse the attention of Head Mistresses of Secondary Schools. A letter has already been sent to Mrs. Bryant as President of the Head Mistresses' Association, and as she offers to put the subject on the Agenda for the next meeting of their Executive, the sub-committee recommend that the whole Association of Head Mistresses should be circularised.

A letter has also been sent unofficially to Mr. Sidney Webb to obtain his advice and co-operation in approaching the London Education Committee.

Character of the Course.

The sub-committee fear that an attempt to modify the existing Course would not satisfactorily provide a suitable Course for Teachers. For the two purposes in view the subject requires to be approached and to be presented in different ways.

A certain amount of co-operation might be possible in Chemistry, Physics, Bacteriology; but in Physiology and Hygiene proper the treatment would need to be different.

A suitable Course for Teachers should (1) require a previous knowledge of Science to the Standard of B.Sc. or Inter. Science Examination, and should (2) include provision for the teaching of General Physiology (including some Botany;) Physiological Hygiene; Psychology; Psycho-Physiology; some Applied Hygiene; Bacteriology; some instruction in Physical Human Anthropometry (?); Access to a School throughout the whole Course for purposes of observation. For students with lesser qualifications a preliminary course of Scientific instruction would be necessary.

The sub-committee urge the Board of Education to press forward and endeavour if possible to provide a satisfactory Course for Teachers, in the belief that this would meet with a response in the near future altogether out of proportion to what it is safe at at the present moment to predict.

No other Institution is giving the instruction which the College would thus be supplying.

It recommends that it be empowered to proceed in its inquiries, and to definitely frame a scheme for a Course for teachers.

Since this report was before the Board of Education, March 23rd., further action, as recommended, has been taken. The Sub-committee hope to meet next week and to report further on May 4th.