

Report of the Committee Appointed to Survey Secondary Education in New South Wales

New South Wales. Committee Appointed to Survey Secondary Education in New South Wales, 1957 (Chair: H. S. Wyndham)

Overview of the document

170 page report of the Committee Appointed to Survey Secondary Education in NSW. The Terms of Reference were provided to the Committee in September 1953 and the report was presented to the Minister in October 1957. The Committee made recommendations for significant reform of the secondary school system in NSW and set out proposals for a system which would provide a four-year general education to all adolescents. Major recommendations include: the abolition of entry examinations for high schools; the extension of secondary schooling from five to six years; the establishment of the Secondary Schools Board; and the introduction of the Higher School Certificate and Leaving Certificate.

Keywords

General education; core curriculum; aims of education; Higher School Certificate; Leaving Certificate; early leavers; transition; vocational education; secondary education for all adolescents; tests; vocation; leisure; communication; critical thought.

Terms of Reference

1. To survey and to report upon the provision of full-time day education for adolescents in New South Wales.
2. In particular, to examine the objectives, organization and content of the courses provided for adolescent pupils in the public schools of the State, regard being had to the requirements of a good general education and to the desirability of providing a variety of curriculum adequate to meet the varying aptitudes and abilities of pupils concerned. (p. 5)

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Summary of Contents

INTRODUCTION

- Notes that the Terms of Reference were remitted to the Committee by the Minister in September 1953.
- States that “The Committee has assumed that the ultimate objective of the Survey was that, after due consideration, action be taken to ensure the provision of a scheme of education which, in its organization and content, would be appropriate for adolescents living in this, the second half of the twentieth century”. (p. 9)
- Notes that “The Committee has assumed that secondary education is to be regarded as ‘the education of the adolescent’ and that its concern was with the whole of the teenage population, not some selected part of it”. (p. 9)
- Notes that the Committee has not made detailed recommendations in relation to the curriculum, but that it sets out “certain principles” which should serve as a basis for curriculum construction.

CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL REVIEW

- Traces the history of secondary education in New South Wales.

- Notes the change from the 19th century when secondary education was a privilege of the social elite, to the “reorganization of secondary education in 1912” which involved “a specific expression of a new point of view: secondary education was the education of the elite of potential scholarship among adolescents”. (p. 32)
- Discusses renewed interest in education following the First World War, as well as compulsory attendance laws.
- Notes that: “It was in 1927 that, in England, the phrase ‘the education of the adolescent’ was first officially used to describe secondary education. In this view, secondary education must serve the needs not only of the few of scholastic inclination, but of all boys and girls in their teens”. (p. 33)
- Refers to the 1936 amendments to the University and University Colleges Act. Notes that although the constitution of the Board of Secondary School Studies “did not make provision for the new ‘non-academic’ adolescent school population ... by 1936, that population had come to constitute the majority of the secondary school enrolment”. (p. 33)
- The chapter concludes with: “Meanwhile, within the Department of Education, schools have been organized and curricula developed, by means of which it has been possible for the Department to meet the needs of the generality of adolescents in a fashion not provided for in the legislation of 1936. Experience has shown the value and promise of these developments, but it is clear that they cannot be carried to their logical conclusion or made to yield the results of which they are capable, while they remain piecemeal modifications of the status quo”. (p. 33)

CHAPTER II: THE PRESENT SITUATION

- Presents the findings of the Committee on its survey of the provision of full-time day education for adolescents in New South Wales.
- In terms of enrolments, notes:
 - More than 175,000 are enrolled in secondary schools and courses in NSW.
 - Approximately 72 per cent attend Government schools.
 - “This enrolment represents more than a tenfold increase in the secondary school population over a period of forty years”. (p. 52)
 - Enrolment is anticipated to reach approximately 250 million students by 1965.
- Notes that in 1956 there were 323 government secondary schools and 137 non-departmental schools registered as secondary schools.
- In terms of organization, notes:
 - Organization of secondary schools differs between city and country.
 - In Sydney and Newcastle, the most suitable applicants are admitted to high school where students are required to study a language, while the other students generally proceed to another secondary college where languages are replaced by manual arts and descriptive geometry for boys and by domestic arts and commercial subjects for boys. (p. 52)
 - In the country, “where the majority of high schools are now found”, all students enter the local high or intermediate high school after completing primary school and “are allotted to courses corresponding to the different types of secondary school in the city”. (p. 53)
 - Courses in non-Departmental schools (specifically Catholic schools) are organized in a similar pattern to State schools.
- In terms of selection for High School, notes:
 - Principals can vary courses but there is limited opportunity to do so as “the general pattern of the secondary curriculum is largely determined by the

requirements of syllabuses approved by the Board of Secondary School Studies. These syllabuses are designed, in their senior stages, to prepare candidates for the Leaving Certificate Examination, which may also serve as the basis for university entrance". (p. 53)

- "The effect of this situation is twofold. On the one hand, Leaving Certificate requirements have an anticipatory effect upon the work of the junior years, though many of the pupils involved have no intention of being Leaving Certificate candidates. On the other, the regard which has to be paid to less academically inclined candidates for the Intermediate Certificate has probably restricted the scope and content of work for the more able." (p. 53)
- In addition to the general pattern of schooling described above, there are also high schools termed "technical", "home science" and "agricultural high schools" in which a group of courses "corresponding to the title of the school is substituted for a second language in the curriculum". (p. 54)
- Two courses have been developed by the Department of Education to meet the needs of students who will not take post-Intermediate studies. A General Activities course "is designed for the least able group of adolescents" and the other is the Alternative Curriculum for Secondary Schools, which is designed for students of "average ability who seem likely not to remain in school beyond the Intermediate Certificate stage". (p. 54)
- "Despite all that has been done in so many schools, the predominant pattern of organization makes it difficult for the secondary schools of the State, as a whole, to provide a programme of education completely satisfactory for all types of adolescents". (p. 54)
- In terms of examinations, notes that:
 - "In Departmental schools, candidates who are not applicants for bursaries and scholarships gain their Intermediate Certificate on the basis of conduct and attendance and an 'internal' examination on an approved course of study. The 'internal' examination is set and marked within the school. Other candidates sit for an external examination, the arrangements for which are approved by the Board of Secondary School Studies". (p. 54)
 - The Leaving Certificate Examination is an external examination conducted by the Board of Secondary School studies.
- In terms of the holding power of schools, notes that:
 - There is a problem of "pupil wastage" and the "small proportion of the group entering schools in any year which remain to complete the course" which is more prevalent in government than non-government schools. (p. 54)
 - The common assumption that early leaving is the result of economic pressure upon parents should be questioned. "The most obvious fact disclosed is that, although few pupils leave before the age of fifteen, they turn fifteen before they have progressed very far in the secondary school". This "leads us to the conclusion that the situation reflects some measure of retardation of progress in the primary school and a need for review of the nature and organization of studies in the secondary school". (p. 55)
- In relation to the University, notes that:
 - There is growing demand for young people to stay at school to the Leaving Certificate stage but who do not wish to go to university.
 - "Taking both points of view into account, we consider that a 'survival rate' of 16 per cent to the final year of the secondary school, if continued, is likely to

deprive the community of sufficiently educated young people and to produce serious dissatisfaction among young people themselves.” (p. 55)

- Only 7.5 per cent of a typical secondary school matriculate. It is pointed out that the number who remain until the final year of secondary school “represent the smallest number we might expect if all of them were of high ability, all wished to proceed to university and all, in fact, matriculated”. Notes rather that many able pupils leave prior to matriculation and “that some who have no more than average ability remain”. (p. 55)
- One-third of those who proceed to university fail in their first year. The Committee argues that “a large part of the answer to our question may be found in what happens to students at the university. At the same time, we feel that any assessment of the situation must take into account the nature and conditions of the senior years of the secondary school.” (p. 55)

CHAPTER III: AIMS

- Sets out the aims of education against which the Committee conducted its survey in NSW.
- Notes that “there are certain features of human nature and of the several social patterns within which boys and girls live which we would regard as postulates, rather than aims, of education”. (p. 56)
- Discusses diversity including difference in mental ability, differences in aptitudes and interests. Argues that not only do children differ from one another, but within each child “there is to be found a diverse pattern of aptitudes, interests and needs”.
- Argues that patterns within individuals (especially at adolescence) are not static as new interests emerge and new abilities manifest and that “the atmosphere, methods and immediate purposes of the school should change to accord with the chief stages of this personal growth”. (p. 56)
- Argues that schooling should not only be a “preparation for adult life” but “true education must concern itself with living now, at whatever stage the ‘now’ may be”. (p. 56)
- Notes that people are social beings and “school’s opportunity lies in the scope which is offered teachers to provide example and guidance to young individuals who have so much to learn of the art of living with their fellows”. (p. 56)
- Lists eight objectives of education as:
 1. Health
 2. Mental Skills and Knowledge
 3. Capacity for Critical Thought
 4. Readiness for Group Membership
 5. The Arts of Communication
 6. Vocation
 7. Leisure
 8. Spiritual Values

Health

- Argues that school “must provide and maintain physical conditions conducive to healthy development. It must provide a measure of organized training. Especially at the secondary level, it must offer an appropriate background of information which will enable pupils to appreciate the significance of health and understand the basic means of achieving it”. (p. 57)

Mental Skills and Knowledge

- Discusses the basis skills of reading, writing and computation and training in these skills as a major task of the primary school which are consolidated and extended in the secondary school.
- Notes the entitlement of children to “the world of knowledge opened to them in Literature, History, Geography and Science”, and that this knowledge is not innate but must be learned. (p. 58)
- States in the final paragraph of this section that: “The school’s task in this respect is much more than the transmission of facts. Even if the individual were capable of acquiring encyclopaedic knowledge, facts alone would not provide the opportunity for the personal development that lies in the various fields of human experience. Thus, in addition to enjoyment, literature affords opportunity for the cultivation of taste and critical perception. In addition to an understanding of the world around us, science inculcates a mode of thought and appreciation of a particular scale of values. It is through studies like these that the school makes its unique contribution to the character of the young, as well as to their knowledge”. (p. 58)

Capacity for Critical Thought

- Discusses the important task of schooling in the development of the capacity for “self-reliant thinking...reflected in personal standards of taste, in the exercise of discrimination and in a healthy habit of scrutinizing new facts and judgements”. (p. 58)
- Argues that the absence of critical thinking means that individuals fall short of “a full measure of personal growth” as well as “prey to the worst devices of ‘mass communication’”. (p. 58)

Readiness for Group Membership

- Begins by noting that one of the aims of education is to making young people “capable of living with their fellows” (p. 58).
- Notes too that this is somewhat at odds with the object of education “to cultivate self-reliant individuals, informed yet critical, each with the mental resources for a satisfactory life”. It goes on to discuss how emphasis on excellence and achievement sets students in competition. “It is one of the apparent contradictions in education that the school must never lose sight of the individual, yet must strive to make the individual forget himself”. (p. 59)

The Arts of Communication

- Highlights the importance of communication in both spoken and written form.
- Discusses the importance of the individual being able to “comprehend the thoughts and feelings of his fellows, and, above all, to convey his own thoughts and feelings with clarity and precision”. Concludes with the statement: “So significant are the arts of communication—in speech, in reading and writing—that their cultivation must be cited as one of the aims of education”. (p. 59)

Vocation

- Begins with observing that “The fact that young people must live in a material world, with its economic necessity, provides the most obvious ground for including in the aims of education preparation for some form of occupation. Though in the highest sense it is not the most important part, earning a living must be a part of living a life”. (p. 59)

- Notes that “True vocational training, even specific pre-vocational training, are not proper elements of a general education. Yet, with each year of adolescence, a complete separation between school and future occupation becomes not only unreal, but impossible”. (p. 60)
- “The secondary school will not provide vocational education, but it has an important function to fulfil in assisting the adolescent to make a smooth transition from classroom to vocation” (p. 60).
- Elaborates four ways in which the school may discharge this function:
 - “The school’s most significant contribution is to ensure that the adolescent has enjoyed a sound general education.” (p. 60)
 - “Secondly, in teaching many of the subjects of the curriculum, the school has the opportunity to relate its teaching to the facts and practices of everyday life.” (p. 60)
 - “Thirdly, no secondary school can ignore the increasing significance of its responsibility for the pastoral care and guidance of its pupils.” (p. 60)
 - The fourth point made is in relation to assisting students with the transition from secondary school and the need for vocational education.
- In addition to these points, it is noted that: “Since one of its purposes is to guide adolescents towards a worthwhile citizenship, the school has a function to perform which is more significant than any we have yet mentioned. In countless ways, the school may teach its pupils the dignity of labour. More than that, the school will, in part, have failed if it sends into the adult world pupils lacking a sense of personal responsibility for equipping themselves to take their place as adults.” (p. 61)

Leisure

- This section discusses the preparation of young people for the use of leisure as an aim of education.
- Foresees technological advances making available a greater amount of leisure time. Notes that many young people are likely to end up in occupations which offer little personal satisfaction, so it is important that they be equipped with the capacity to make full use of leisure.
- Cautions against prescriptive approaches and also the idea of “the proper use of leisure”. (p. 61)
- Argues that the task of the school is to “awaken interests, to keep mental horizons broad, to discover and cultivate skills, and accustom its pupils to use the hours free from lessons in a profitable and satisfying fashion”. (p. 62)

Spiritual Values

- Begins by noting that “any analysis of what might be considered to be the components of a life recognized as worthwhile, cannot stop short of a recognition of values which are best termed spiritual”. (p. 62)
- Discusses the formation of “habits and attitudes” and the importance of the influence of the school in the formation of character.

CHAPTER II: APPRAISALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Begins by reiterating the changes in secondary education over the past 50 years outlined in Chapter 1:
 - Notes that all children will go to secondary school and most remain until the age of fifteen. Notes that this does not mean that they will complete the “Intermediate stage of a secondary school course”. (p. 63)

- Argues that although the “outstanding characteristic of secondary school enrolments has been shown to be the rapidly falling off in numbers in successive years of the secondary course, until only a small minority remain in the final year”, secondary education is now available to all who seek it up to age 17 or 18. (p. 63)

The Central Problem

- Notes that the most significant feature of the changes in secondary education is the view that it is not for a select minority but that it is for ALL adolescents “irrespective of their variety of interests, talents and prospects”. (p. 63)
- Argues that the view of secondary education for all adolescents raises a new set of issues, namely that: “The education ‘of all adolescents’ implies a proper provision for all types and levels of ability and for the wide variety of interests and need to be found in any entire school generation. What is sometimes overlooked is that this very definition of secondary education makes it obligatory for the community to provide a suitable education, not only for the ‘average’ adolescent, but also, and on the same social and moral grounds, for the adolescent of talent and for the adolescent who is poorly endowed”. (p. 63)
- Notes that against the backdrop of this ‘central problem’, this chapter takes up the second term of reference: “to examine the objectives, organization and content of the courses provided for adolescent pupils in the public schools of the State, regard being had to the requirements of a good general education and to the desirability of providing a curriculum adequate to meet the varying aptitudes and abilities of the pupils concerned”. (p. 64)

Method of Approach

- Examines the organization of the school and argues that the organization of the school should be determined by the “nature and needs of pupils for whom it is to be designed”. (p. 64)

Transition to Secondary Education

- Notes that the method of selection, which “takes into account parents’ wishes, primary school attainments and general record, and the mental ability of the pupil”, was adopted “after a succession of forms of the customary type of examination has proved unsatisfactory”. (p. 64)
- Views the present method as an improvement on that which preceded it, but notes concerns that the method of entry also determines the courses that pupils will take.
- Highlights again the problem of student dropout and the Committee’s finding that many students leave because they fail in courses to which they have been allotted.
- Argues that “selection for specific types of secondary education should not take place prior to admission for the secondary school”. (p. 65)
- Urges “that the present method for competitive selection for particular schools be abandoned at the earliest possible moment”. (p. 65)
- Suggests that determination of courses of study should be progressively made.
- Also highlights as a problem “the sense of failure or inferiority” for those who do not gain access to selective high schools. (p. 65)
- Argues that the organization of secondary education should then follow two assumptions: “first, that in any given area all pupils who have completed the primary stage of education should pass into the secondary school without prerequisite test or examination” and “second, that the secondary school should be organized so as to

make possible postponement of a final determination of the course or pattern of courses the adolescent should follow". (p. 66)

- Canvasses concerns that in the context of the expansion of secondary education that "too much thought might be given to the mediocre and to the dull, with consequent neglect of the gifted minority". Argues that "no scheme of secondary education dare ignore the obligation to make provision for the cultivation of talent among adolescents in whatever field it may express itself". (p. 66)
- However, argues that the "cultivation of talent" should not be achieved through segregation of students and notes that as talents manifest at different times for different students, courses should be organized so that they can be taken up when students are ready for them.

The Demands of University Studies

- Deals with the question of how the demands of university studies are to be met.
- Suggests that neither successful completion of the Leaving Certificate or success in a Matriculation examination conducted by a university is an accurate predictor of success at university studies.
- Notes that standards demanded by universities must be met, but that this should not happen at the expense of "a sound general education for all adolescents". (p. 67)
- Recommends the extension of high school from five to six years. Argues that "On both grounds, namely the desirability of higher standards and the need for maturity, we have taken the view than an additional year should be provided". Notes that this is not a recommendation for the general extension of school life, but the extension for a minority of students who will proceed directly from school to tertiary studies. Recommends that the additional year be provided at secondary schools. (p. 69)

Types of Organization of Secondary Education

- Notes that the organization of the secondary school must make possible for all adolescents "a good general education" and that it must provide "a variety of curriculum adequate to meet the varying aptitudes and abilities of the pupils concerned". (p. 69)
- Reviews and dismisses the following options: extending the primary school; the 6-3-3 junior and senior school organization; the New Zealand intermediate school; and turning the first year of high school into a transition or orientation year.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Notes that "We have therefore come to the conclusion that a more elastic type of provision must be made. Setting aside certain features of our proposals for later examination, we recommend the following pattern of organization:
 - I. On completion of the primary school course and, in general, about the age of twelve years, all pupils should proceed, without examination, to secondary education organized consistently with the recommendations which follow.
 - II. The organization and curriculum of the high school should be such as to provide a satisfactory education for all adolescents and should be designed to cover four years, to the age of about sixteen.
 - III. The curriculum should be designed to provide a core of subjects common to all schools, together with a progressive increase in the proportion of elected subjects. On this basis, the greater part of the curriculum for the first year should be allotted to the common core.

- IV. Under teacher guidance, election of subjects should progressively be made in the light of pupil achievement and potential.
- V. On satisfactory completion of the four-year course, a School Certificate should be issued on the basis of the result of an external examination.
- VI. This examination should be designed as a terminal or retrospective examination and the Certificate as a formal indication of the successful completion of a satisfactory course of secondary education.
- VII. No external examination should be held, nor any certificate of general status issued, before the end of the fourth secondary school year.
- VIII. Pupils who wish to proceed beyond the School Certificate level, including those who aim to matriculate, should remain at school to follow a course or courses leading to the Higher School Certificate Examination. The type and content of this examination should be such as to make it acceptable as a test for university matriculation. The further course of study should be designed to cover two years.” (p. 72)

DISCUSSION

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

- Discusses the transition from primary to secondary school in terms of completion of the primary school course, age of transition, liaison between primary and secondary schools, class teaching in First Year and the use of tests.

Secondary Education for All Adolescents

- Reviews the provision of secondary education for all adolescents in terms of schools size and coeducation.

The Common Core of the Curriculum

- Proposes that a group of subjects form a core of the curriculum but it is not suggested that this core will remain unaltered for every child.
- Argues that a common curriculum could be defined in terms of the following subject fields: English, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Music, Art, Crafts, Physical and Health Education and Religious Education.
- Argues that while the Committee does not wish to set out exhaustive arguments for the inclusion of the above subjects, the following observations are made “to avoid possible misunderstanding” (p. 82):
 - Social Studies: argues that although there are those who doubt the merits of such a generic term for studies of History, Geography and Economics “...we take the view that “Social Studies” describes a field of human thought and experience against which a course can be designed and taught in the spirit of the general purpose of the core curriculum”. (p. 83)
 - Science: notes that whatever title given to science in the common curriculum it should include study of biological science.
 - Mathematics: “In this field we have in mind the type of experience of Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry which the ordinary citizen of today needs in the conduct of his everyday life”. (p. 83)
 - Religious Education: Argues that while Religious Education is included in the common core “by way of affirming our view that education has a spiritual basis and that parents have a right to expect that instruction in religion should be provided for their children”, it is also made clear that it “cannot be regarded

as mandatory” and therefore differs from the other subjects included as core.
(p. 83)

- States that “One assumption in our recommendation that the subjects listed above should be adopted as the core of a general secondary curriculum is that the syllabus in regard to any of those subjects should be set out in quite general terms”. (p. 84)
- Suggests that guides for teachers should be drawn up for a new curriculum and that freedom should remain with teachers to select and organize their actual programs of work.
- Argues that schools should have the same opportunity to organize classes in ways that seem best to them.

Electives

- Proposes that in addition to the common core, students should be able to select, under the guidance of the principal, “other courses in accordance with their ability, aptitudes and interests”. (p. 85)
- Argues that it is desirable that choices be as comprehensive as possible, that they allow the most able of students to specialize in their fields of interest, and that they provide “the opportunity for the achievement of a measure of real success in some aspect of school work on the part of those adolescents who tend, in other circumstances, to become submerged”. (p. 85)
- Argues that electives must be of adequate duration and demand adequate standards.
- Notes that the range of electives could be quite extensive while not being prescriptive and provides a list of subjects most or all of which a comprehensive secondary school might be expected to offer including: Art, Commercial Principles and Practice, Geography, History, Home Science, Languages (Ancient and Modern), Manual Arts (e.g. Drawing, Metalwork, Woodwork), Mathematics, Music and Science (e.g. Agriculture, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Physics).
- Promotes a general view that four years of secondary education should provide for increasing time to electives and that first year should be almost entirely devoted to the common core.

The School Certificate

- Argues that students should be encouraged to remain at school for four years beyond primary school.
- Notes that the School Certificate will be the mark of completion of a “sound general education for adolescents”. (p. 89)
- Discusses the importance of English in depth and argues that “in the schools of a country like Australia there is no task more urgent or more pervasive of all activities than the achievement of good standards in the understanding, appreciation and use of English. To be incompetent in Mathematics may be a handicap in this modern age; to be incompetent in the mother tongue is to lack one of the basic needs of civilized living”. (p. 89)
- Suggests a possible curriculum pattern allocation for the common first year which allocates one quarter to English, one half to Social Studies, Science and Mathematics and a further quarter to Music, Art, Crafts, Physical and Health Education and Religious Education.
- Proposes that “successful completion of the four years of general secondary education shall be recognized by the award of a “School Certificate”. (p. 94)
- Proposes that the School Certificate should: be awarded on the basis of external examination; maintain a scope and standard that reflect the four years of a general

education and a balanced curriculum “pitched at the level of the pupil of average ability”; and be issued by the Director-General of Education and the exam conducted by the Department of Education.

- Recommends the establishment of a Secondary Schools Board to liaise with schools.

Early Leavers

- Argues that “In making no provision for any formal recognition of the completion of an earlier stage of secondary education, we have been moved by the conviction that, under existing conditions, a satisfactory general education for adolescents cannot be achieved in less than four years”. (p. 96)
- Sees the four years as providing adolescents the opportunity of making a “smooth transition” to apprenticeships and vocational courses suitable for sixteen year olds. Proposes that with “proper liaison between the secondary school and technical education” and in the absence of any formal credential before the School Certificate, there will be an increase in the number of young people staying at school to complete four years of secondary education “and pass, with less hesitation than at present, to the variety and types of further education”. (p. 96)
- Suggests that students who leave without gaining the School Certificate be issued with “a formal statement of their attainments, attendance and conduct”. (p. 96)

Higher School Certificate

- Argues that while the School Certificate “is designed to recognize the completion of a sound course in secondary education” the Higher School Certificate is recommended following an additional two years of secondary education, for those who wish to proceed to tertiary education.
- Recommends that “universities be invited to accept a pass (of an approved pattern) at the Higher School Certificate Examination as meeting matriculation requirements”. (p. 98)

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First Term of Reference

- Summarizes the findings of the Committee in relation to the first term of reference ‘to survey and report on the provision of full-time day education for adolescents in New South Wales’.
- Overviews the findings of the Committee in relation to: enrolments, schools, organization, selection for high school, courses of study, examinations, holding power of schools and the relation to the university.

Second Term of Reference

- Makes the following recommendations under the second term of reference:

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

- “On completion of the primary school course and, in general, about the age of twelve years, all pupils should proceed, without examination, to secondary education organized consistently with the recommendations which follow”:
 - “The unquestioned transition of pupils from primary to secondary school should be accompanied by a continuing scrutiny of the standards achieved by the average pupil in the final year of the primary school and the consolidation of primary school work in the first secondary school year, as there is evidence of a need to continue practice in the fundamental skills more systematically than appears sometimes to have been the case.” (p. 104)

- “The present practice whereby pupils enter secondary school at an average age of twelve and a half years should continue and, as there is a limit beyond which a pupil’s progress cannot be deferred, pupils of low ability should not remain in the primary school beyond the age of thirteen and a half years.” (p. 104)
- “Staffs of each type of school should know more about each other’s objectives and problems. For smoother progression, especially during the first secondary school year, the curricula of both primary and secondary schools should be examined conjointly.” (p. 104)
- “Class teaching in a “home-room” might be organized during First Year although, in subjects such as Science, Manual Arts and Music, specialist teaching as well as special rooms is desirable from the beginning of the secondary school.” (p. 104)
- “Although we do not believe there should be any examination at the end of the primary course specifically for selection for secondary school, we consider that the construction, supply and systematic use of standardized tests of attainment at the primary level should be increased. The results of tests of ability and attainment can assist in the organization of First Year classes and the guidance of pupils throughout the secondary school.” (p. 104)

Secondary Education for All Adolescents

- “The organization and curriculum of the high school should be such as to provide a satisfactory education for all adolescents and should be designed to cover four years, to the age of about sixteen.” (p. 104)
- “We recommend the provision of ‘comprehensive’ secondary schools even though it may mean having schools with enrolments in excess of 600 or 700, as the necessary range of electives is likely to require classes, at least in the final year, which would be too small in terms of staff and facilities unless the first year enrolment approached 200.” (p. 104)
- “Explicit provision would have to be made for sub-groups of reasonable size, which might be achieved by an organization into ‘houses’, each limited to the number one housemaster could get to know personally. Such an organization would make considerable demands upon the principal, who would have to establish and maintain a wider sense of membership of the school as a whole.” (p. 105)
- “Despite the inconclusive nature of the evidence placed before us and the lack of unanimity on the part of the Committee, we record that professional and lay opinion as expressed to us is that as new secondary schools are established by the Department of Education, they should, generally speaking, be co-educational schools, although we are aware that conditions in a particular locality may call for some modification of this general rule, e.g. “twin schools” might be established.” (p. 105)

The Common Core of the Curriculum

- “The curriculum should be designed to provide a core of subjects common to all schools, together with a progressive increase in the proportion of elected subjects. On this basis, the greater part of the curriculum for the first year should be allotted to the common core.” (p. 105)
- “Recommendation III is based on the conviction that there are certain fields of thought and experience of which no adolescent should be ignorant. The common curriculum should therefore include English, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Music, Art, Crafts, Physical and Health Education, Religious Education.” (p. 105)
- “The syllabus of any of the subjects in the “core” curriculum should be set out in quite general terms. A statement for each subject which is a sufficient guide to teachers, but which is not narrowly prescriptive, should be drawn up by a representative panel

working within the framework of a general statement of the aims and spirit of the new curriculum as a whole.” (p. 105)

- “Teachers should have freedom to adapt each syllabus to the needs and capabilities of their pupils and to the conditions of a particular school. If class groups are organized primarily on the basis of ability, a large degree of variation between classes in the content of the programme and in the method of treatment will be made possible.” (p. 105)

Electives

- “Under teacher guidance, election of subjects should progressively be made in the light of pupil achievement or potential.” (p. 105)
- “Elective courses should not consist of a variety of short-term subjects, but be of adequate duration and demand adequate standards.” (p. 105)
- “Assuming parity of esteem of courses within the secondary school, we recommend a range of electives which would enable a selection to be made in terms of a pupil’s ability and interests.” (p. 106)
- “The following list indicates a range of electives most or all of which a comprehensive secondary school might be expected to provide: Art, Commercial Principles and Practice, Geography, History, Home Science, Languages (Ancient and Modern), Manual Arts (e.g. Drawing, Metalwork, Woodwork), Mathematics, Music, Science (e.g. Agriculture, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Physics).” (p. 106)
- “While no specific subject will necessarily be listed in the first secondary year as an elective, the allocation of time to the several subjects, or the organization of classes, should be such as to permit pupils to go beyond the general requirements in some field or fields of special interest to them.” (p. 106)
- “Beyond this first year the time devoted to the common core will depend upon the ability of the pupils but might, in successive years, be approximately 75, 65 and 60 per cent of the total school time.” (p. 106)
- “By the fourth year, pupils may be studying three elected subjects in addition to the common subjects of the curriculum.” (p. 106)

The School Certificate

- “On satisfactory completion of the four-year course, a School Certificate should be issued on the basis of the result of an external examination.” (p. 106)
- “This examination should be designed as a terminal or retrospective examination and the Certificate as a formal indication of the successful completion of a satisfactory course in secondary education.” (p. 106)
- “There are fields of worthwhile achievement other than languages, mathematics or science in which adolescents may excel and for which the secondary school of to-day should make provision. We believe it is possible to devise courses of study in many fields which will challenge the ability and engage the interest of most adolescents, but which will enable teachers to extend their most able pupils to the full range of their ability.” (p. 106)
- “There is no task more urgent than the achievement of good standards in the understanding, appreciation and use of *English*. The schools have a duty to foster an awareness of the rich possibilities of the language.” (p. 106)
- “We believe it is reasonable to expect all teachers not only themselves to write and speak good English, but to take a conscious and planned part in achieving acceptable standards among their pupils.” (p. 106)
- “In general, we favour in the earlier years the extensive, rather than the intensive, reading of literature, with a gradual intensification of the field as interest develops.” (p. 106)

- “For the common first year, a possible time allocation (based on thirty-six forty minute teaching periods each week) might be: English, one quarter; Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, one half; Music, Art, Crafts, Physical and Health Education, Religious Education, one quarter. This time allocation would have to be reviewed in subsequent years because of the introduction of elective courses.” (p. 107).
- “Where a pupil elects a certain subject, he should not also be required to follow the “core” course in that subject. Thus, though periods will need to be subtracted from all subjects in the common core in order to provide for electives, none of the subjects of that core will disappear from a pupil’s “core plus electives” curriculum throughout the four years.” (p. 107)
- “Two electives should, in general, be taken after the completion of First Year and a third at the beginning of Third Year. At least five periods a week should be devoted to each elective. On the other hand, there will be some pupils, generally of low ability, whose course will throughout be based on a maximum allocation for the subjects of the core curriculum.” (p. 107)
- “The opportunity for choice of courses should be kept as open as possible. There should be no objection to a pupil attempting an elective course, and then changing it or reverting to the core subject if his first choice proved unsuitable.” (p. 107)
- “Further election of courses should be possible beyond the School Certificate stage, for senior pupils should be able to embark upon some courses which are new, though not unrelated to the work they have already done.” (p. 107)
- School Certificate Examination: “To establish the status of the School Certificate in the public mind and to safeguard standards, we recommend that an external examination at the end of four years of general secondary education. However, we look forward to the day when, with the School Certificate firmly established, modifications in the type of examination might be explored.” (p. 107)
- “The scope and standard of the examination should be such as to ensure that all schools will be free to provide a sound programme of general education for all adolescents up to the age of sixteen. The examination should therefore be devised without reliance upon prescriptive syllabuses of work.” (p. 107)
- “So far as the examination of subjects of the common core are concerned, the standard of the examination should be pitched at the level of the pupil of average ability. In the case of the elective subjects, account should be taken of the fact that both the scope and standard of work should provide opportunity for the most able.” (p. 107)
- “The School Certificate should be issued by the Director-General of Education and the examination should be conducted by the Department of Education.” (p. 108)
- “To assist the Department and to maintain liaison with the schools, we recommend that a board, to be known as the Secondary Schools Board, be established, principally representative of the Department of Education, the several groups of secondary schools and such other authorities in subject matter fields, from the university or elsewhere, as may be determined.” (p. 108)

Early Leavers

- “No external examination should be held, nor any certificate of general status issued, before the end of the fourth secondary school year.” (p. 108)
- “We feel that, in the absence of any formal credential before the award of a School Certificate, an increasing number of young people will be encouraged to complete a coherent course of general secondary education.” (p. 108)
- “However, since a considerable proportion of adolescents, especially at first, will continue to leave school at fifteen years, we recommend that pupils who leave school

without gaining their School Certificate should be given a formal statement of their attainments, attendance and conduct.” (p. 108)

- “We take the view that it is better first to build up a system of general secondary education which would encourage children to remain voluntarily at school and gain their School Certificate, rather than defer the introduction of the four-year course until the school leaving age is raised by legislation to sixteen.” (p. 108)
- “The problem of helping the pupil who might otherwise be forced, largely because of economic circumstances, to leave school before gaining his School Certificate should be met by a review of bursary awards beyond the statutory school leaving age. We would observe, however, that the reasons why pupils leave school at the age of fifteen are rarely solitary.” (p. 108)
- “In country areas, the problem of providing for highly intelligent senior pupils might well be met by the concentration of Fifth and Sixth Year pupils in the larger country towns, and an adjustment in the system of bursary awards. Some extension of the hostels and conveyance schemes would also be necessary.” (p. 108)

Higher School Certificate

- “Pupils who wish to proceed beyond the School Certificate level, including those who aim to matriculate, should remain at school to follow a course or courses leading to the Higher School Certificate Examination. The type and content of this examination should be such as to make it acceptable for a test for university matriculation. The further course of study should be designed to cover two years.” (p. 108)
- “Authority for the conduct of the Higher school Certificate Examination, including courses of study and the issue of the Certificate, should be vested in a Board of Senior Schools Studies comprising representatives of the Department of Education, the universities and both Departmental and non-Departmental secondary schools.” (p. 109)
- “While this stage of schooling should be designed to meet the needs of the most able adolescents between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, the two senior years are not to be regarded merely as a preparation for matriculation; they are an integral part of the education of these young people. It follows that provision should be made for school activities which are essential to the education of adolescents but which do not involve preparation for examinations.” (p. 109)
- “The number of subjects in the curriculum may be less than at present prescribed for the Leaving Certificate Examination, but there should be a balance in the choice of subjects a pupil studies.” (p. 109)
- “The selective nature of this group of pupils and their greater maturity by the age of eighteen years should make possible the provision of courses which will afford matriculants a better prospect of successfully undertaking the early stages of university study.” (p. 109)