

(No. 71.)



1868.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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BOARD OF EDUCATION.

MR. STEPHENS' REPORT, AND CORRESPONDENCE CONNECTED  
THEREWITH.

*Return to an Order of the Council dated September 12, 1868. (Mr. Whyte.)*

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Laid upon the Table by Sir R. Dry, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
September 15, 1868.



*GENERAL REPORT on the State of elementary Education in Tasmania, for the Year ended 31st December, 1867, by T. STEPHENS, Esq., M.A. Oxon., Inspector of Schools.*

*Hobart Town, 4th May, 1868.*

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING been chiefly occupied, after my resumption of official duties, with the work of Secretary to the Board, I am not in a position to say much on the question of the internal working of Public Schools during the year 1867, and will therefore confine myself in this Report to subjects of a more general character.

*School-houses.*

The following table shows the tenures under which School-rooms are now occupied by the Board of Education:—

A. Site vested, or proposed to be vested, in Trustees for Public School purposes only..	38
B. The property of religious bodies of different denominations .....	36
C. Private property.....	28

Most of the buildings in Class A. have been erected under the conditions of the Building Grants, one-third of the cost being defrayed by local subscription. Two, the Central and the Macquarie-street Schools in Hobart Town, were built or purchased without a local contribution; and in some few instances the Schools are held in buildings originally designed for other purposes and transferred by Government to the Board of Education. Several of the School-rooms built within the last ten years are exceedingly ill-planned, and some have already become so dilapidated as to require extensive and costly repairs. In those which have been built during the latter half of this period a marked improvement is perceptible both in respect of convenience and durability, and where sufficient funds have been available there is little room for criticism. Sometimes however the cost of construction has inconveniently restricted the accommodation and rendered it impossible to make suitable provision for other important matters. It seems to me highly important that the regulations for the erection of School-houses should be made so elastic as to bear application to a great variety of conditions. The different local peculiarities of site, materials available for building, qualifications of local artificers, pecuniary resources of the inhabitants, probable attendance of Scholars,—all these should be thoroughly understood before any plan is prepared. The special requirements of Schools, the importance of which can only be fully appreciated by those who have had practical experience in teaching, should not in any case be neglected; but these, while they are of infinitely more consequence than mere architectural design, need not in any way add to the expensiveness of construction.

Of the 36 School-rooms in Class B. 21 are occupied rent free, the remainder being rented by the Board. No distinction is recognised between Public Schools so circumstanced and those held in buildings which have been permanently appropriated for Public School purposes, all alike being open to the members of all religious denominations. It is not to be denied however that they sometimes, in the eyes of parents, acquire a semi-denominational character which injuriously affects their operation. On Sundays they are frequented exclusively by the children of the religious bodies to which they belong. The clergyman is often the only visitor, and the only local agent who certifies to the destitution of those who claim admittance as Free Scholars. These and other circumstances tend to create a prejudice in the minds of parents who belong to a different denomination. In newly settled districts where the centres of population are continually shifting,—in land held on clearing leases and liable to be depopulated at their expiration or by a change of owners,—in other places where there is no reasonable prospect of a permanent attendance,—I should always recommend the occupation of any existing buildings that may be available, in preference to the expenditure of public money upon School-houses which may become useless in a few years. But in the older and populous settlements, and in all occupied townships, it seems highly desirable, looking to the object of a National system of Education, that all children should have the opportunity of meeting for instruction on common ground.

Of the 28 School-rooms in Class C. 19 are occupied rent free, and 9 are rented directly or indirectly by the Board. Many of these are small and generally ill-adapted to educational purposes, and are only to be tolerated on the ground that no better accommodation is available.

Free quarters in Public School-houses are provided for 31 Head Teachers, and 41 occupy residences rented by the Board or receive house allowances varying from £10 to £40 per annum. Of the rest, 16 have to provide quarters for themselves, and 13 occupy residences belonging to religious bodies, or provided by the liberality of private individuals. In one district,—Campbell Town, (the solitary instance of local combination in aid of the annual maintenance of a Public School,)—the rent of the Teacher's house is paid by voluntary subscription.

The annual expenditure upon rents and house allowances amounts to about £1180, more than one-eleventh of the whole Educational Grant. It would be difficult to effect immediately any considerable reduction in this item, but opportunities for relieving the Board from a liability which by the terms of the Regulations ought to be at least shared by the districts will occur from time to time. There are many districts which are well able to avail themselves of the very liberal conditions upon which building grants are now offered, but it is not to be expected that they will come forward so long as the necessary accommodation for School or Teacher is provided from public funds.

#### *Reduction of Expenditure.*

Attention has been recently drawn to the disproportionate cost of the Hobart Town Schools as compared with those in the rural districts, but the obstacles which stand in the way of a reduction of the expenditure under this head have hitherto proved insuperable. There are two Schools, in Macquarie and Murray-streets respectively, which might be closed without any great injury to the interests of Public Education. But the former is held in a building which is vested in Trustees for Public School purposes, and cannot be turned to account in any other way. The latter is maintained at such a trifling cost that little would be gained by its reduction. There are then the Central School, and the four Schools held in buildings attached to the churches of St. George, Battery Point, St. Joseph, Harrington-street, St. John, Goulburn-street, and Trinity, these five Schools being maintained at an annual expense of something over £1760. The Central School is public property and must be maintained so long as funds are voted by Parliament for educational purposes: the others are so similarly circumstanced that the arguments which might justify the closing of one would apply with equal force to all. If therefore economisation of the public funds be the object in view it can only be attained through a reduction in the annual cost of these four Schools, and there is perhaps no good reason why this should not be attempted, due regard being of course paid to existing interests. Four Schools of a less pretentious character, but providing efficient instruction in the rudimentary branches, might be maintained at a greatly diminished cost, and the Central School would for many years to come supply accommodation for the elder children whose parents might wish their education to be continued under the auspices of the Board. It is only in this item and in that of Rent that any reduction of expenditure is possible; and if the increasing demand for new Schools is to be met without any corresponding increase in the Parliamentary Grant, it is evident that retrenchment of some kind must be speedily effected. There is however another consideration which deserves attention. If it be desired that the Central School shall ever assume its proper position as the chief Public School of the Colony, and in that capacity furnish opportunities for the training of Teachers who may carry into the rural districts a practical acquaintance with the best methods of instruction and the principles of school management, it must be protected in the first instance from the competition of other Public Schools maintained on a precisely similar footing.

#### *Teachers.*

This leads me to the general question of the want of competent Teachers to supply the vacancies which occur from time to time in our country Schools. The Pupil Teacher system cannot be depended on to furnish the class of Teachers which we chiefly require. The Public Schools are all conducted on the 'mixed' system, boys and girls being taught together. It not unfrequently happens that they are attended by scholars of both sexes who have quite emerged from childhood and have no means of remedying defects in their early education but those afforded by the Public School. The appointment of a young ex-Pupil Teacher to the sole charge of a School is at all times undesirable, and in such cases as those which I have cited would be open to the gravest objections. For some of the smaller Schools a female Teacher will suffice, and in some exceptional cases adult Mistresses may be provided to share the responsibilities of the School with the young and inexperienced Master. But the proper head of the ordinary country School is a married Teacher, and it is important for many reasons which I need not particularise that the female assistant should be the Teacher's wife. There would be a fair supply of decently educated and respectable persons of this class if it were possible to hold out to them a reasonable prospect of advancement contingent upon industry and successful management of their Schools; and if suitable provision were made for their passing through a short course of systematic training previously to appointment to the charge of a School, there need be no fear for the result. Again, the benefits of a course of training need not be limited to those who might hereafter become candidates for employment under the Board. A large proportion of our present Teachers are admirably suited for the positions which they hold in every respect but one,—the knowledge of the art of teaching and the general principles of School management. These would profit by training to a greater extent than mere candidates, for their experience has in most cases at least taught them to see their deficiencies, and this is the first step towards improvement. It is quite impossible to provide satisfactory means for this purpose in any of our existing Schools as they are at present constituted, but the necessary alterations may be effected without any great difficulty, and without any increase in the annual expenditure.

I have spoken of the absence of a reasonable prospect of advancement as one of the obstacles which interferes with the local supply of the material from which duly qualified Teachers might under favourable

circumstances be developed. As this objection operates still more forcibly to prevent the introduction of qualified Teachers from other countries, it may be well to point out why it exists, and how it may be removed. In other countries where a system of state-aided or state-supported Schools is in force, all Teachers employed in such Schools are classified and receive certificates of different grades according to their literary qualifications and professional ability. The qualifications required in the several grades are described, and a certain money value is attached to the certificates defining the rate of remuneration to which the holders will be entitled under conditions which are distinctly specified. Any one, therefore, who is desirous of embracing the profession of Teacher can ascertain without difficulty the probable income which he may expect upon obtaining employment, and the prospective rise in rank and salary which he may reasonably hope to obtain by industry and assiduity in qualifying himself for the efficient discharge of his duties. It is true that one of our fundamental rules\* distinctly recognises the principle of classification as one of the leading features in the system of Public Education, but up to the present time it has remained inoperative through causes, chiefly of a financial nature, which I need not now detail, and the income of Teachers is determined rather by the geographical position of Schools, or other fortuitous circumstances, than by their comparative merits. The result is that a teacher who enters the service at the minimum rate of salary has no certain prospect of ever attaining a higher position by his own exertions or by any success in the management of his School. The prizes of the service are so few, and the chance of his obtaining one of them a contingency so remote, that they altogether fail to act as incentives to zeal and application. He may indeed seek, by an appeal *ad misericordiam*, for an increase of salary, but the central authority is naturally indisposed to grant a special allowance to one applicant which cannot be granted to others whose cases may be equally deserving of consideration. The evil effects of so unsatisfactory a state of things are forcibly described in the Report (p. xxvi.) of the Commission on Education presented to the Legislature during the Session of 1867; and as the Commissioners go on to recommend the introduction of a system of 'certificates of various grades,' or, in other words, a classification of Teachers, I am not without hope that the Board will ere long be enabled to remove a defect which must always operate as a formidable bar to improvement in the efficiency both of Teachers and Schools.

I may here be permitted to refer incidentally to a matter which specially concerns myself, but is closely connected with the subject under consideration. At the request of the Commissioners I submitted certain suggestions upon a mode of remunerating Teachers in some approximate degree according to their qualifications and the conduct of their Schools. The principle which I endeavoured to establish was identical with that which I have just described, and was in no way affected by the question of central or local support, though the latter of necessity formed an element in the scheme suggested. It was with no small feeling of disappointment that upon receiving the Report I found myself regarded as a champion of what is commonly known as the system of "payment for results," a system which I have always strongly opposed, and had elsewhere described as "totally inapplicable to the circumstances of this Colony." The misapprehension is doubtless attributable to a want of clearness incidental to the condensed and incomplete shape in which my suggestions were necessarily submitted. I find some consolation in reflecting that the mistake occasioned the insertion of an eloquent description of the evils attendant upon the "result" system, although the exposure is made at my expense.

#### *Instruction.*

The Programme of Organisation and Instruction was revised towards the end of the year, and completed by an addition specifying the age at which children might be expected to have reached the different grades of proficiency assigned to the several classes. This indeed formed a part of the original scheme, and was based upon an acquaintance with Primary Schools in England and the neighbouring Colonies. Since the publication of the programme I have compared the results of the examination of a large number of Schools with the ages of the children examined, and, after eliminating all cases that could in any respect claim to be treated exceptionally I found sufficient evidence to show that the standard of age is fairly applicable to the somewhat different conditions prevailing in this country. It will, of course, be understood that regulations of this kind can only have the force of general rules. The averages may be at any time affected by the presence of elder children whose early education has been neglected, and by various disturbing causes over which a Teacher has but partial control. On the other hand, these difficulties are often fostered and multiplied by a want of tact and judgment on the part of the Teacher, and made to serve as the excuse for the inefficiency of his School. Where the children have been a reasonable time under instruction, have attended with tolerable regularity, and yet fall short of the required standard, Teachers may at once conclude, without waiting for the Inspector's visit, that the fault does not lie in the children but in themselves.

I pass on to the general objects of the system of instruction adopted by the Board for the Public Schools. I am especially anxious that the Programme shall not be confounded with the scheme introduced under the 'Revised Code' in England. The latter, from which portions of the Standards of our scheme of classification were borrowed, was constructed solely for purposes of examination and is not necessarily connected with the ordinary working and arrangement of the School. Here something of a more comprehensive nature was required. It was desirable to introduce a principle of classification applicable to the varying circumstances of different Schools; to define the course of instruction; to prevent too great a preponderance of any special branch of study, or the undue advancement of any section of the School; and at the same time to provide a scale by which the standard of instruction might be approximately tested. In Schools which are rarely attended by children over 12 or 13 years of age it is futile

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\* In determining the class and also the amount of the salary, the Board will take into consideration not only the literary qualifications of teachers or candidates as tested by examination, but also the nature of their testimonials, their previous character, the condition of their Schools (in the case of Masters already employed) and their method of conducting them, and the average daily attendance of children. Sec. II. Rule 2.

to attempt to reach a high standard. But, by giving sound instruction in the elementary subjects, we may at least lay a groundwork which will fit the youth of our growing population for the ordinary exigencies of life, and enable them to take advantage of the opportunities or means of improvement which may hereafter fall in their way. The tendency of scholars to make rapid progress in those branches of study which harmonise with the peculiar idiosyncrasy of their Teacher, and to fall behind in others, will often have been noticed by those who have had any practical acquaintance with Schools. They will exhibit an extraordinary knowledge of the heights of mountains, the length of rivers, or the position of places in all parts of the world, and at the same time be utterly unable to spell correctly an ordinary sentence out of their lesson books. Or they will solve complicated sums in arithmetic with astonishing readiness, and yet fail to answer the simplest questions on the meaning of words of daily occurrence in their reading lessons. These are extreme cases, but the tendency towards this defect is notorious. It is not to be expected that a Teacher will be able to maintain under any circumstances a perfectly uniform rate of progress in all the subjects of instruction. His first duty is to classify his Scholars according to some fixed principle; and their proficiency in reading is the simplest and most convenient basis for classification. The Standards, so far as the Teacher is concerned, are merely indications of the general course of study to be followed in the several classes. When he finds, as he inevitably will find, that individual children are falling behind the average proficiency of the class, he is not to consult his own convenience and adopt a separate classification for separate subjects, but rather to make temporary arrangements for paying special attention to the deficiencies which have attracted his notice. And the estimate which is formed of his efficiency will mainly depend upon the result of his labours in thus carrying out the objects of the Programme. This is, of course, only one part of his duty. At the risk of being regarded as stating a truism, I am continually obliged to point out that instruction in the elementary branches is not *education*. These are merely a portion of the skeleton, so to speak, of that ideal form which is to be developed and brought to life under his hands: a part of the means to an end, not the end itself. Here it is that the system of "payment for results" exercises a mischievous influence upon the Teacher's work. Only the lower and more mechanical part of training is capable of being measured by scales and standards, and represented by an equivalent in the shape of pounds, shillings, and pence as remuneration for work done. The higher and nobler duties,—the exercise of moral influence, the maintenance of discipline, the inculcation of good habits, the patient labour in counteracting the effects of evil associations and example, the cultivation and development of intelligence and the reasoning faculties—all these are beyond the reach of the educational statistician. And the inevitable tendency of the "result" system must be to lead a Teacher to regard as the most important of his labours those which pay him best, and to degrade the system of education into a lifeless and mechanical routine. That such a tendency has become plainly manifest under the operation of the Revised Code in England, in spite of all the restrictions introduced to prevent it, is shown by the Reports of some of the most experienced of H.M. Inspectors; and no different result could be expected except by those who altogether ignore the motives and influences which regulate the actions of ordinary men in all ranks of life. In Tasmania, the defect in regard to the payment of Teachers lies rather in the opposite extreme, and there is no reason to dread any ill consequences from the introduction of the Programme of Instruction if it be properly understood and its operation carefully supervised. But if undue weight be given to examination in the mechanical branches of instruction, or if attention be specially called to comparative statements of the per-centages of passes under certain limited standards, the Teacher will inevitably be led to take an entirely wrong view of the charge entrusted to him, and the same evils must follow as under a system of "payment for results." To judge fairly of the efficiency of a School we require a knowledge not merely of the actual attainments in the elementary branches, but also of the respective ages of the children, the time under instruction, the intelligence and the amount of general information acquired, the discipline and "tone" of the School, the local peculiarities, with many other important details which cannot be exhibited in a tabular form like the readings of scientific instruments.

#### *Free Scholars.*

The experience of the past seven years has not in any way tended to remove or lessen the objections which I have in former Reports pointed out as attending the operation of the system of Free Certificates. Upon the abstract question of the duty of the State in regard to the education of destitute or neglected children there can be only one opinion; it is the difficulty of guarding against abuse of the measures designed to obviate the natural consequences of the misfortune or fault of their parents that makes it at least questionable whether the assistance rendered is beneficial or the reverse. I believe that the Special Visitors without exception are actuated by purely charitable motives in issuing the Certificates under which children are admitted free to the Public Schools. But they, or at least many of them, are fully alive to the evils of the system. Among these I may mention the absolute impossibility of establishing any practical definition of the term "inability to pay School Fees." The children of A. are admitted to a School under a Free Certificate. In a short time B., who has hitherto been punctual and regular in his payments, comes to the Teacher and tells him that he has just as good a right to a free education for his children as any of his neighbours. B.'s refusal to pay School fees, or the withdrawal of his children from School, leads eventually to the issue of another set of certificates. Thus the infection spreads until it reaches the point at which an honest pride or a sense of moral obligation impels the parent to assert his independence. There are places in which all the parents are already beginning to claim as their right a free education for their children, and it will be readily seen that the standard of independence must inevitably be lowered from day to day. Relieved from the necessity of paying fees, the parent ceases to take an interest in the regular attendance of the children; and as it is quite impossible for a Teacher to carry out any proper system of classification or instruction where his classes are daily liable to the irregular incursions of children who require separate and special teaching the invariable result is that the whole School suffers. The difficulty of drawing a line which will confine the benefits of the free certificates to those who are really deserving of assistance will be readily appreciated by those who have had any experience of the working of a system of charitable payments where there is no responsible agency or local liability. Many of the Special Visitors have called my attention to

the abuses which seem to be inseparable from the system, and those Members of the Board who have ever reviewed the lists of free scholars are well aware how hard it is for the central authority to carry out the regulations, or enforce the conditions which have from time to time been imposed. It is seldom possible to obtain precise information respecting the circumstances of the parent, but the following statements taken from the free lists of different Schools will show the views which are sometimes entertained as to the existence of a claim for relief from ordinary parental obligations, and my personal inquiries have satisfied me that these are not isolated or extreme cases. "A—, father a baker earning about 30s. a week." "B—, father earns about 25s. per week. Mother a drunken character." "C—, father a constable, with 28s. a week." "D—, father a carpenter. Both parents intemperate. Might do very well if of sober habits." "E—, father a labourer, wages 30s. per week." "F—, father a shoemaker. Both parents of drunken habits." This is a too common case. Again, taking three Schools, in each of which there were last year more than 70 free scholars, I find that in one the condition of the parents of 42 per cent. is thus described:—"hawker," "broker," "cook," "carter," "servant," "surveyor," "porter," "plasterer," "cooper," "painter," "brickmaker," "tailor," "saddler," "shoemaker." In another 48 per cent., and in the third 50 per cent., are described as the children of parents following precisely similar trades or occupations. In another School the free scholars are the children of small farmers, who are perfectly well able to pay in 'kind,' if not always in money. But they will not even send the Teacher a load of firewood to relieve him from the expense which he incurs in providing for their children's comfort in cold weather. I might multiply instances of this kind if further evidence were necessary to show that very many, probably a majority, of the children whose instruction is paid for out of public funds do not belong to the destitute classes for whose relief the system was introduced, and that too often the parent is directly encouraged to disregard his moral obligations towards his off-spring and to persevere in his evil habits. There are many instances of real distress and poverty in quarters where their existence would not be suspected, but most might be met by a reduction in the authorised scale of fees, and the rest are chiefly cases for compulsory legislation. The lowest classes of the population—those which most urgently call for the interposition of the State, are almost wholly untouched by the system of free certificates, which has thus failed to secure its most important object, while it has created evils which from their very nature must be continually on the increase. And as similar results have invariably followed the introduction of similar schemes elsewhere, wherever the experiment has been tried, the inevitable conclusion is that the defect lies not so much in the mode of administration as in the system itself. I should be tempted to instance other objections of even a more formidable character than any which have been mentioned if I were not aware that the Board is fully alive to the importance of the subject. I earnestly hope that some plan may yet be adopted which will afford to neglected and destitute children a far larger measure of relief without the injurious effects which now attend the issue of free certificates, and the remuneration of the Teacher by capitation fees paid wholly by the Board of Education.

#### *Conclusion.*

There is in all young and isolated communities a strong tendency towards self-glorification. The narrow limits of a colonial field of view preclude opportunities of comparison with the results attained under conditions of more extended intercourse and higher civilisation, and we are all too apt to be easily satisfied with what we are doing or have already accomplished. It seems then that the especial duty of those to whom important trusts like that of the supervision of education in a rising colony has been confided is continually to direct attention to existing defects, and by every available means to stimulate progress in an upward direction. It is in this spirit that I have been prompted, in this and former Reports, to remark upon the deficiencies of Teachers and Schools. The conclusions of an observer depend of course upon his point of view. If we look back, there is good reason to rejoice over the improvement which has been made during the past twenty years. If, on the other hand, we compare the state of education in the Primary Schools of the Mother Country with that in the great majority of the Public Schools of Tasmania the result is anything but satisfactory. And it is to be remembered that while the latter profess to afford education to a large section of the middle classes of this Colony, the former are chiefly confined to the labouring population. The difference between an efficient and an inefficient School is not simply one of degree: it is the difference between good and bad; between light and darkness. Let efficient Schools be established through the length and breadth of the country by the appointment of none but competent Teachers, and we shall soon cease to hear of reluctance to pay School fees, or of the necessity for making attendance compulsory. To effect any great change will of course be the work of years, but there is much yet to be done before we can even be satisfied that we are in the right road to improvement, and the mode of setting about this preliminary work has already been pointed out.

I cannot conclude this Report without expressing my gratitude for the change which has recently been made by the appointment of a second Inspector. The time consumed and the physical labour involved in travelling from place to place will not be lessened by a limitation of the area of inspection, but the opportunity of paying two or more visits in the course of the year to all Schools within his district will enable the Inspector to prosecute his work with a better chance of success; and the relief from the heavy responsibility attaching to the unaided supervision of the whole of the Public Schools will enable him to devote more attention to important branches of his duty which have hitherto been partially neglected.

I have the honor to be,  
Gentlemen,  
Your obedient Servant,

T. STEPHENS.

*To the Chairman and Members of the  
Board of Education.*

*Education Office, 22nd August, 1868.*

SIR,

I NOTICE that my General Report for 1867 has not been laid before Parliament; and I am given to understand that the Board did not consider it a proper document to be appended to their Annual Report.

I do not in any way question the propriety of the Board's decision, though unaware of any grounds of objection to the mode in which my opinions on the condition of Education are stated; but as the ordinance under which my office was established directs that the Inspector, in addition to the performance of duties which the Board may direct, is to prepare an Annual Report for the information of the Governor, I beg respectfully to request that the Report already referred to may be transmitted to the Colonial Secretary, to be filed, if necessary, with the records of his Department.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

T. STEPHENS, *Inspector of Schools.*

*The Chairman Board of Education.*

*Education Office, Hobart Town, 10th September, 1868.*

SIR,

IN reply to your letter of the 22nd ultimo, I am directed by the Board to inform you that they are of opinion that the duties of the Inspector of Schools are confined to the performance of such duties as were directed by the Board, and included in the "Instructions for the Inspector of Schools" issued 7th April, 1857. The above, and the instructions subsequently issued, dated 28th April, 1868, comprise all the duties that are required to be performed by the Inspector of Schools unless directed otherwise by the Board, and will be your guide in rendering Reports to the Board.

The Board have not received from the Government, either at the time of your appointment or at any subsequent period, any communication informing them that it was the duty of the Inspector to make any Special Report for the information of the Governor distinct from that drawn up for the Board, and which they usually append to their Annual General Report.

I am therefore directed to inform you that they are unable to comply with your request.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

HENRY BUTLER, *Chairman.*

T. STEPHENS, *Esq., Inspector of Schools,*  
*Hobart Town.*