Five- and Six-Year-Olds at Kindergarten: Miss Morris' Experimental Primary Class, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association 1921–27

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ABSTRACT

Between 1921 and 1927, the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association (WFKA) offered selected children turning five, and about to enrol in the state school system, the opportunity to stay at kindergarten for a further two years. With the approval of education officials, these children became students of a kindergarten-based primary class for five- and six-year-olds and taught the school curriculum according to Froebel's play-based pedagogy for children from 3 to 7 years. This paper pieces together fragments of data from a range of discrete material sources that, whilst scanty in nature, together help illuminate the aspirations, expectations and experiences of those involved in the experimental project; in particular, the first fifteen children enrolled in 1921 and their teacher Miss Edna Morris. While the project proved to be a short-term endeavour, it shows the Association's desire and commitment towards the use of kindergarten schools to change educational provision for children along the line of Froebel's teachings. Whilst the ideological argument for education reform remained strong amongst supporters of Froebel's pedagogy and progressive ideals, long-term change proved more complex than realised.

INTRODUCTION

In May 1919, representatives from the then five New Zealand Free Kindergarten Associations met at a national conference to discuss many points of interest, including proposed changes for the training of students. A newly developed Elementary Certificate included a syllabus of work for teaching of children to the age of seven years. Concern was expressed that in Kindergarten, no opportunity was afforded for students' practical experience with 5 and 6 year olds.[1] The conference decided that each of the four associations offering kindergarten teacher training should form one Primary Class of 'not more than 15 children up to the age of 7 whose parents for any reason might wish to keep them longer away from the big Infant Schools'.[2] This

[1] Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Annual Report for 1921; Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-4105, Folder 10, 11.
[2] N.Z. Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand. (1928). *New Zealand Free Kindergartens: A brief sketch of the growth of the Free Kindergarten Associations of the Dominion*. Dunedin: Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand, p. 4.

was a significant decision that challenged the then established division between formal schooling for children over five years (even though school attendance was not required before the age of seven) and preschool provision for children under five. A delegation was nominated to visit the then Director of Education, the Hon CJ Parr seeking approval to implement the scheme. They asked also for subsidy increases to pay higher salaries to teachers involved. Both requests were granted.[3]

Two free kindergarten associations are known to have established primary classes: Auckland Free Kindergarten Association (AFKA) at Myers Park Kindergarten and Wellington Free Kindergarten Association (WFKA) at Taranaki Street Kindergarten. Little is known of these primary classes. Historical accounts to date rarely acknowledge their existence, the exception being a little known brief history of the movement written and distributed in 1928.[4] They are an initiative, significant at the time, which over the decades faded from collective memory. That is, until key material objects were deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library and made available for viewing. The most significant item being a scrapbook containing images and examples of children's work from the first intake of the WFKA primary class.

Photograph 1. The Wellington Free Kindergarten Association 1921-22 Primary Class and their teacher Miss Edna Morris[5]

[3] Mary Gill, President's Report, WFKA Report of Kindergartens for year ending March 31st, 1921, p. 4.
[4] N.Z. Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand. (1928). *New Zealand Free Kindergartens: A brief sketch of the growth of the Free Kindergarten Associations of the Dominion*. Dunedin: Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand, p. 3.
[5] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169-3.

This paper explores the context in which this pedagogical initiative arose and the prevailing rhetoric of child-centered pedagogy and progressive education in relation to children aged five and six years of age. The first part of the article discusses early questions of how such children should be taught and who should teach them. The decades following the 1877 Education Act was a time of education reform that saw the separate but parallel establishment of the new colony's education system and the free kindergarten movement catering for younger children. The remainder of the article explores the diffusion of Froebel's teachings into practice in the Association's primary class over the period 1921 to 1927 with particular emphasis on the first intake of 1921-22 as experienced by the children and their teacher, Miss Edna Morris.

MISS MORRIS' SCRAPBOOK

The scrapbook titled *My Primary Class, 1921-1922*, opens with a dedication `to dear Miss Morris with love from all the boys and girls in her class'. Bound in soft leather, the book is tied together with leather strips threaded through two holes [see Figure 1]. Its twenty-two pages, reinforced at the inner edges, are richly illustrated. Photographs of the children, some formally posed and others at play, sit alongside examples of the children's writing and artwork. To view the book, now fragile with age and use, requires the wearing of white archival gloves and the use of a special cushion to protect the book's spine.

When Edna Morris acquired the gift is not known. Nor is the name of its creator, although it seems likely to have been a person within the kindergarten. What is apparent is that Morris valued the gift. In a handwritten note written over forty years later in 1966, she recorded the background to the scrapbook:

> A primary class was held at the Taranaki Street Kindergarten for seven years 1921-1927. Fifteen children were chosen to stay on at the kindergarten after they had turned five and were kept on for two years. They then went on to Standard 1 at the State School.[6]

Carefully placed in the book for long-keeping, the note suggests her emotional response to the gift as something to be valued, a personal treasure. Later, the scrapbook was passed for safekeeping to Wellington kindergartener, Joyce Barnes and then to Dr Geraldine McDonald for donation to the Alexander Turnbull Library collection. It was in 2006 that I became aware of the Library's acquisition. My interest was soon sparked upon viewing the eighty-year-old scrapbook with its story of educational innovation and underpinning aspirations of possibility and promise. I set out to know more. Archival searches of association records, newspaper accounts and other sources (although fragmentary in nature) slowly revealed discrete glimpses of the WFKA primary class in action. Soon I felt a duty of care to those involved in its creation and preservation to ensure this forgotten story was included in the historical record of kindergarten in New Zealand. Such stories are important to histories of young children's schooling in that they bring into view evidence both of individual and sector commitment towards progressive educational initiatives and of a specially prepared programme for five- and six-year-olds.

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[6] Edna Morris, handwritten note inserted inside the book, *My Primary Class, 1921-1922*; Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169.

Figure 1. Scrapbook cover of *My Primary Class, 1921-1922*[7]

THE COLONIAL REFORM OF SCHOOLING ALONG FROEBELIAN LINES 1870 - 1920

Early European settlers to the new colony of New Zealand included men and women interested in progressive education. They brought with them a common belief in the need for reform of the education system and, in particular, the teachings of educationist Friedrich Froebel for children aged three to eight. They hoped the new colony would provide the opportunity to contribute to a better future for themselves and for children. Many were politically active and saw education as a force for social change. By the 1870s, whilst a minority voice, there was a sufficient groundswell for a loosely formed kindergarten movement that grew over the second half of the nineteenth century and into the

[7] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169-Cover.

first two decades of the twentieth century. The movement included education officials, teachers, educators and reformists who held in common a shared interest in child-centred pedagogy and were united in the cause to build a better education system, free of the restraints of the system left behind in England. There was a widespread feeling of energy, confidence and a sense of that period being a time of possibility and experimental approaches in the education of young children.[8] A time when, as Helen May states, 'Under the mantle of progressivism and spurred by the imperatives of the new sciences, the state became increasingly inclined to invest in the education and well being of its children'.[9] Within such a climate, Froebel's teachings came to the fore, and for a time, 'it became fashionable to be a Froebelian'.[10]

Key principles were promoted and expounded within educational circles: each was argued in the name of Froebel. Central was the principle that young children between three and seven years needed a different pedagogy to that of older students; one based on Froebel's model of child-centered teachings recognising the integrity of childhood in its own right.[11] Children were to be seen, not as passive, receptive beings (as in more traditional approaches) but as active and responsive participants in their own learning. The earliest years of a child's life were argued to be the most important in a child's education and the foundation for all later learning. They opposed children under seven entering formal schooling, drawing on Froebel's belief (set down in his book, *The Education of Man*) that 'Knowledge acquired in their own active experience is more living and fruitful than that conveyed only by words'.[12]

Froebelians recognised the uniqueness of each child's capacity and potential. In addition, they argued for the importance of play as a central integrating element in a child's development and learning 'at such a tender age when their powers of observation are very active and when they are impressionable to a degree'.[13] Froebelians also advocated and supported the provision of private kindergartens in the main cities from the 1870s, kindergarten pedagogy in infant schools from 1879, and free kindergarten associations from the 1880s.[14] They sought to educate, inform and to gather support for kindergarten pedagogy for all children under seven, advocating for children to have continuity of experience between kindergarten and formal schooling.

While the rhetoric and the commitment for reform were strong, outside of a few pockets of successful implementation of kindergarten pedagogy,[15] early

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[8] Cumming, I., & Cumming, A. (1978). *History of state education in New Zealand 1840-1975.* Wellington: Pitman, p. 180.
[9] May, H. (2003). *The discovery of early childhood* (2nd ed.). Wellington: NZCER, p. 243.
[10] Ibid., p. 180.
[11] May, H. (2005). *School beginnings: A nineteenth century colonial story*. Wellington: NZCER, p. 243.
[12] Froebel, *The Education of Man*, cited in: Wolfe, J. (2002). *Learning from the past.* Mayerthorpe, CA: Piney Branch, p. 7.
[13] The Association's Work, *The Evening Post*, 1 March, 1924, p. 13.
[14] See: Helen May's (2005), *School beginnings*; Bethell, K. (2001). *Dunedin's kindergarten pioneers: Some new stories. The founding of free kindergarten provision in Dunedin, 1879-1890.* Dunedin: University of Otago College of Education.
[15] For example, see: Helen May's (2005), *School beginnings*; Bethell, K. (2007). *'Not just for a name that we plead': Fashioning the ideological origins of early kindergarten in Dunedin and Wellington, New Zealand*. Doctoral Thesis, Victoria University, Wellington.

attempts for change proved difficult, especially within the compulsory school sector. In 1913, George Hogben, Inspector General for Schools and Secretary for Education expressed his concern that the formal teaching of reading and writing, 'threatened to invade the infant room to such an extent as to crush out of our memories, all recollections that such a man as Froebel ever lived'.[16]

In contrast, the kindergarten provision for children under school age gained some strength with free kindergarten associations being established in the main cities from 1889 and a growth in private kindergartens attached to state and private schools. Such growth was not without difficulties. The compulsory age of schooling was seven, with the minimum age of enrolment set at five. Kindergartens used to enrolling children up to seven were affected by the Government funding granted to schools – but not for kindergarten – for children from five. Without government funding for children once they turned five, free kindergarten associations were increasingly forced to redefine themselves in relation to the compulsory sector as meeting some socially recognised need that could not be met within the formal education system.[17]

Two key points of difference were argued: firstly, that they catered for children under five years and, in particular, for poor families unable to provide the basics of family life thus providing the social and moral skills and traits needed for school. Secondly, they actively positioned themselves as the key shapers of kindergarten pedagogy and regularly argued the need to invest in the education of young children up to eight years. They positioned their kindergarten teacher training programmes as the key suppliers of qualified kindergarten teachers for both free kindergartens and infant schools. Students in Auckland, for example, routinely received opportunities to apply theories into practice within primary as well as kindergarten classes.[18]

However, the issue of the demarcation between schools and kindergarten remained, bringing concern for the educational needs of children aged five and six within their schools. Here follows just two examples. In 1900, in an address to the Christian Women's Temperance Union, Kelsey argued for young children to experience a greater continuity of experience between the two settings:

> Let a true kindergarten for children from four to six be attached to every public school; let each pupil teacher go through at least one year's training with a fully qualified kindergartener; and let every headmaster so link together kindergarten and school that the development should be continuous and the chain of impressions perfect and unbroken.[19]

Similarly, Wellington's Miss Riley reported in her 1915 annual report:

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[16] Address by Mr Hogben, *The Dominion,* 13 February 1913, p. 6.
[17] May, H. (2005). *School beginnings: A nineteenth century colonial story*. Wellington: NZCER.
[18] See early annual reports of the Auckland Free Kindergarten Association, held at the Auckland Library.
[19] Lavinia Kelsey, A Paper on Education, *Otago Daily Times*, 16 May 1900, p. 3.

> More kindergartens and more money was needed to carry it on, and she felt more sorry than she could say for the small five-year-old children who had to leave the kindergartens when they reached that age, and lose their identity in the huge classes of sixty, seventy, or eighty that were to be met with in the State schools.[20]

On-going kindergarten representations to Government saw the establishment in 1914 of an Elementary Froebel Certificate. Girls who had passed Public Service entrance and received two years' training in a recognised kindergarten were now entitled to sit for a Government examination and receive a Government certificate.[21] This news was greeted with pleasure by kindergarten associations. Auckland's Margaret Gibson reported that such diplomas will 'have more than a local value, and greatly assist the holders in obtaining employment in their special branch of the teaching profession either Government or private schools'.[22] Three years later, it was arranged that kindergarten trainees 'wishing to qualify for Infant School work should be allowed to enter the Training Colleges on the same term as pupil teachers'.[23]

All associations embraced such changes. For free kindergarten in Wellington, the future seemed positive both for the possibilities of employment opportunities for graduates of their teacher training programme and for greater provision of Froebel's kindergarten pedagogy for children under eight years. The decision of the 1919 Kindergarten Conference to extend provision to five- and six-year-olds was an opportunity they were keen to implement.

THE OPENING OF A PRIMARY CLASS FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 & 6 AT THE WELLINGTON FREE KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION

In December 1920, Miss Riley reported that 'fifteen children who are to form the Primary Class for children of five to seven years have been obtained and the parents are enthusiastic over the prospect of their children remaining at the kindergarten'.[24] Kindergarten students too were to benefit through the opportunity to work with children up to seven years, where they were to gain 'some knowledge of the teaching of Reading, Writing and Number work when they graduated and go to teach in schools for children over five of age'.[25] Mary Gill, President of the WFKA (and an ex-primary teacher), drew upon key progressive ideals in outlining the Association's intention:

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[20] Miss Riley, Principal's Report for December 1915, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association; Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-2524.
[21] Government and Kindergarten Building the Nation, *The Dominion*, 13 May 1915, p. 2.
[22] Kindergarten Work, *The New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1913, p. 5.
[23] N.Z. Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand. (1928). *New Zealand Free Kindergartens: A brief sketch of the growth of the Free Kindergarten Associations of the Dominion*. Dunedin: Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand, p. 4.
[24] Miss Riley, Principal's Report for December 1918, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association; Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-2524.
[25] Edna Morris, handwritten note inserted inside the book, *My Primary Class, 1921-1922*; Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169.

> It is our earnest hope that when our group pass on they can take their right place in the State School. At the same time we have no intention of 'speeding up' but rather aim towards helping the individual child to think and [have] an all-round development, hoping and looking for the day when all interested in the education of children will realise that at the age of seven or thereabouts the child is most ready to begin to learn reading and writing.[26]

Critical to the plan was the recent opening of a new spacious building for the Taranaki Street kindergarten. After years of operating in rented premises – three small hot rooms upstairs over a fruit shop with no outdoor space – the WFKA now owned its first purpose-adapted building. Best of all, was the outdoor space – the first free kindergarten in Wellington to acquire its own garden. Mrs Gill remarked at the opening in November 1918, 'there will be room now to carry out the work without any of the crippling handicaps under which it was done in the old building and the children will have space for work and play as well as having more attractive surroundings'.[27] And, room enough to accommodate a primary class.

Photograph 2. Miss Morris and children, Taranaki Street Kindergarten garden[28] (circa 1921)

[26] Mary Gill, President's Report, WFKA Report of Kindergartens for year ending March 31st, 1921, p. 4.
[27] A Kindergarten Achievement, *The Dominion*, 4 November 1918, p. 2.
[28] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169-4.

The Taranaki Street Registration Book for 1920 shows that fifteen children were accepted into the primary class in 1921 – three girls, Nancy Campbell, Doris Smith and the fatherless Betty Purdue, and twelve boys including twins, Fred and Jack Winter. The fathers' occupations, when given, indicate a group of children from a low socioeconomic background. Cyril Finderup's father is recorded as a wharf labourer; Harry Johnson's father worked in a foundry. Fred and Jack's mother worked in a dairy. The remaining children are: Harry Johnson, Donald Nicholson, Cyril Gunn, Alex Cook, Robert Kemp, Albert Patmore, Levy Lewis, and Martin Charles.

For many children, the father's occupation is left blank suggesting many were fatherless or that their fathers were unemployed. The children's ethnicity is not included although their names suggest most were of British stock.

Photograph 3. The Primary Class 1921-22, Taranaki Street Kindergarten[29]

Edna Morris, the children's teacher, graduated from the WFKA in 1916 taking a position at the original Taranaki Street Kindergarten. Three years later, she accepted a teaching position as head teacher of the kindergarten at Suva Girls' Grammar School in Fiji. On her return in 1921, she was appointed Director of the newly-formed Primary Class. Outside of a year's leave of absence in 1925, Morris remained in her role with the primary class until 1927. Morris was known to be a competent and respected teacher and recognised for her love of children. Kindergartener, Marjorie Connell, looking back on Morris' career, commented 'she liked to keep up with all the modern trends in education, particularly in kindergarten teaching'.[30]

[29] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169-7.

[30] Marjorie Connell, WFKA Graduates, 1970; Correspondence and related papers including a transcript of an interview with Marjorie Connell (née Seed), and a report on the Rachel Reynolds Kindergarten; Hocken Library MG-1894.

From the outset, those involved with the primary class sought to implement Froebel's teachings and progressive ideals. Kindergarten work dealt with the child as he was from his point of view and the value of a play-based pedagogy, in which the child's own interest was made the centre of the teaching, was implemented. Unlike the large infant classes in the public schools, class size was kept small at just 15 to allow teachers to undertake the informed observation of children necessary to support effective development, learning and teaching.

Yet, it is also clear that the curriculum in practice operated more in the spirit of Froebel than in its pure form. Dunedin's Lavinia Kelsey explained in 1900 that by kindergarten, she meant kindergarten 'as Froebel would have if he was living at the present day':

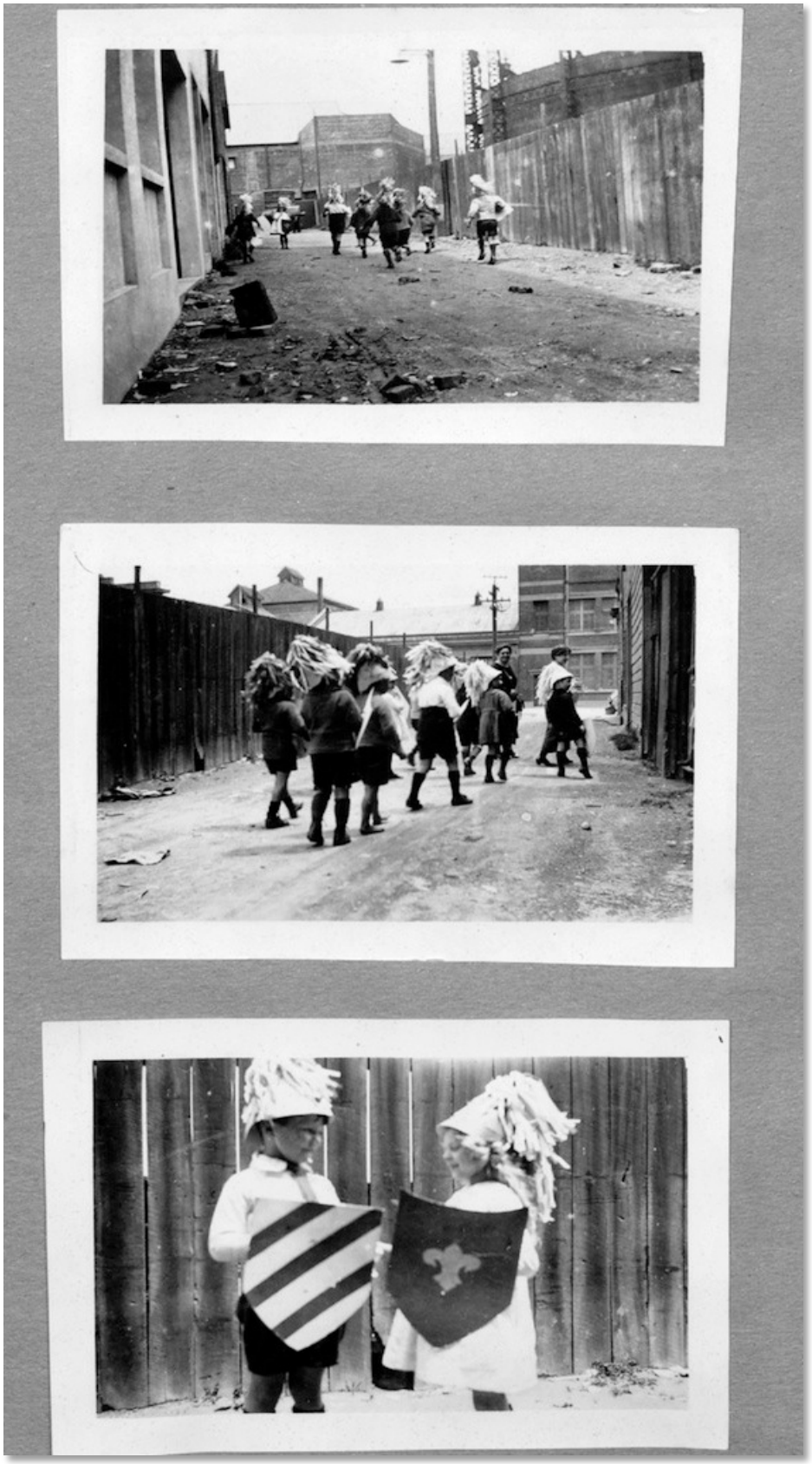
> He [Froebel] left his work largely unfinished. He did not live to apply his methods to the higher stages of education. The sense of colour and influence of colour never appealed to him. Biology was at the time he lived a quite undeveloped science. But now wine must be put into the old bottles. We must take Froebel's spirit, adapt it to our modern life, and carry his work to larger heights and finer issues.[31]

The curriculum as practiced was reformulated in accordance with prevailing beliefs and needs and tempered also in the implementation through the level of understanding of the complexity of Froebel's teachings.

The initial images in Miss Morris' book show children outside at play, informally posed with teachers and undertaking planned learning themes within a Froebelian framework of learning through play. The first, draws upon Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha and the second, the Crusades. In the latter [Photograph 4], children are photographed outdoors where they have room to move, and to role-play battles. Dressed as crusaders, boys and girls alike wear coned headdresses and carry shields adorned with the symbols of war and religion, items made in an earlier class. They are learning through active participation in their own learning rather than learning imposed by the teacher.

[see Photograph 4 over the page]

[31] Lavinia Kelsey, A Paper on Education, *Otago Daily Times*, 16 May 1900, p. 3.



Photograph 4. Learning about the crusades. Primary class, Taranaki Street Kindergarten (circa 1921-22)[32]

[32] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX-8169.

The second half of the scrapbook contains examples of individual children's writing and drawing. The local experience of children as a starting point for curriculum is apparent. A drawing by Doris, one of the classes three girls, is of a sailing boat [see Figure 2]. Accompanying her drawing is a letter written to Miss Morris detailing a personal experience of home life that reveals not only her written skills but also glimpses into her home life. Doris writes, 'When I came home I went up the stairs to see my mother and she was polishing the floor and the baby put her fingers in the polish'. In her writing, Doris shows she has learnt the conventions of writing. She demonstrates awareness of correct spelling and ability to self-correct spelling errors. Doris is yet to learn capitals and writes with teacher assistance.

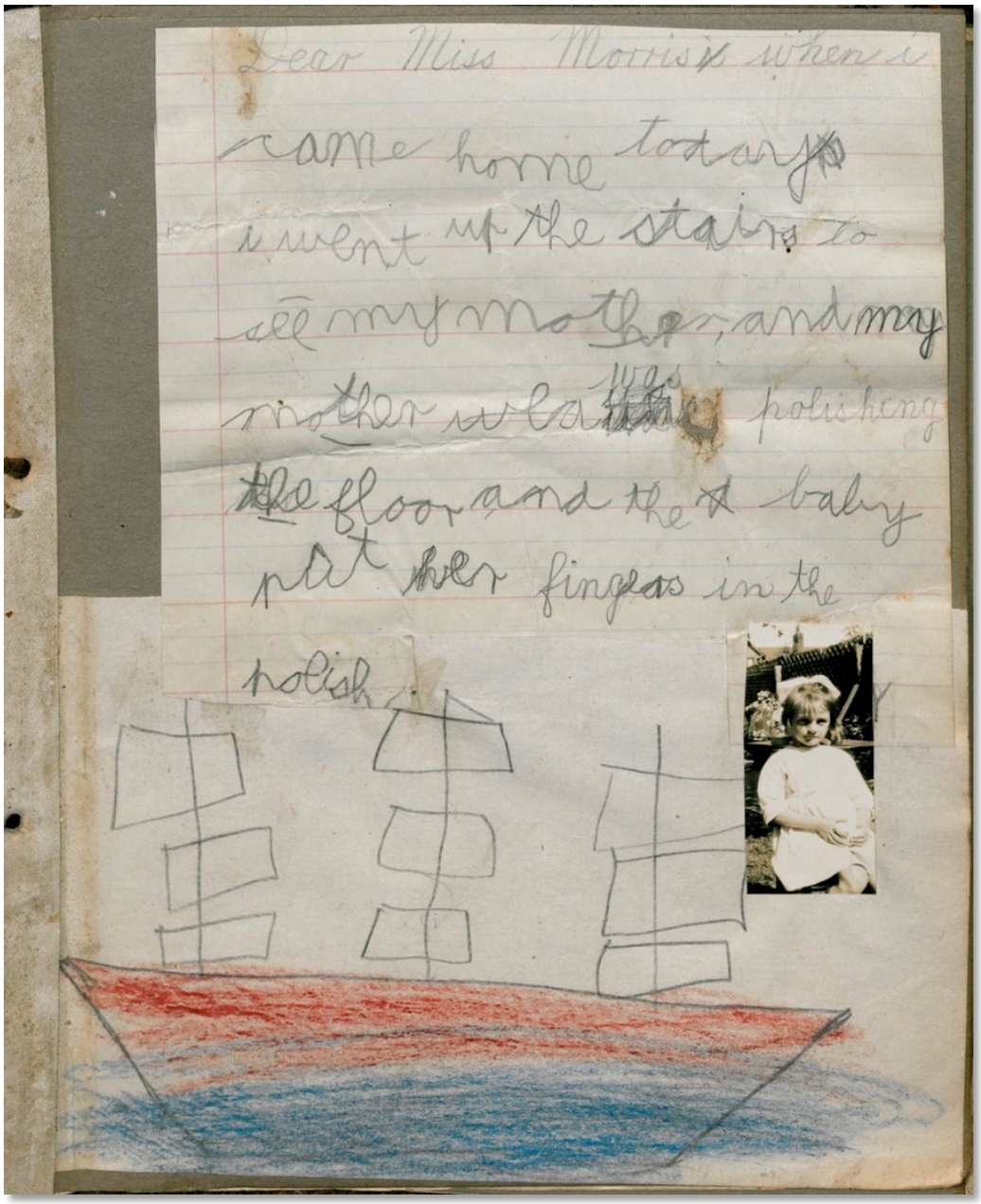


Figure 2. A drawing by Doris[33]

[33] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-8169-Boat.

In the next drawing [see Figure 3], Cyril shows both his powers of observation and knowledge of different forms of transport. His work is detailed and includes a drawing of a ship peopled with sailors, the Captain and passengers, a plane, a seagull, people and a balloon aircraft of sorts.

Figure 3. A drawing by Cyril Finderup[34]

'Work on the wharf' was a subject Edna Morris, in conjunction with Misses Scott and Herzog, had previously undertaken with kindergarten children in a public exhibition of 'play-work' in 1918. A detailed description of this event – and a glimpse of the teaching methods used to promote learning based around the local and the familiar – can be seen in a newspaper account of the event.

> 'Where some fathers worked. What they do, and why. Where the boats go and where they come from. What they carry.', formed the subjects of conversation in the three little groups that formed in the marked off space on the floor, and if occasionally some startling information was given … there was on the other hand, considerable familiarity with ships and what pertains to them was also shown. Possibly the greatest amount of pleasure was taken in the table work, one little group building a model wharf and sheds, not forgetting the coloured lights, another making clay models of wonderful boats, and third group sailing boats of walnut shells with tiny sails, which recklessly voyaged upon a stormy sea, blue as Recketts could make it, surging on a large black tea tray …[35]

[34] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-8169-Cyril.
[35] Social and Personal, *The Dominion,* 22 August 1918, p. 9.

Cyril's clear knowledge of – and interest in – sea transport stems from not only his kindergarten experiences but possibly also his father's work as a wharf labourer.

Harry's picture and text [see Figure 4] is linked to a series of activities around Longfellow's epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. In his text and his drawing Harry shows his powers of observation, his understanding of the story of Hiawatha and his expanding literacy skills. Harry's spelling of written as 'rittan' shows his use of phonics as a learning tool and suggests a pedagogical focus on reasoning as a means of learning to spell. A series of five photos from the scrapbook [not shown] show the children wearing Indian headdress and constructing and decorating a tepee. Thus, the children both *hear*, and in their play, *see* Longfellow's poem.

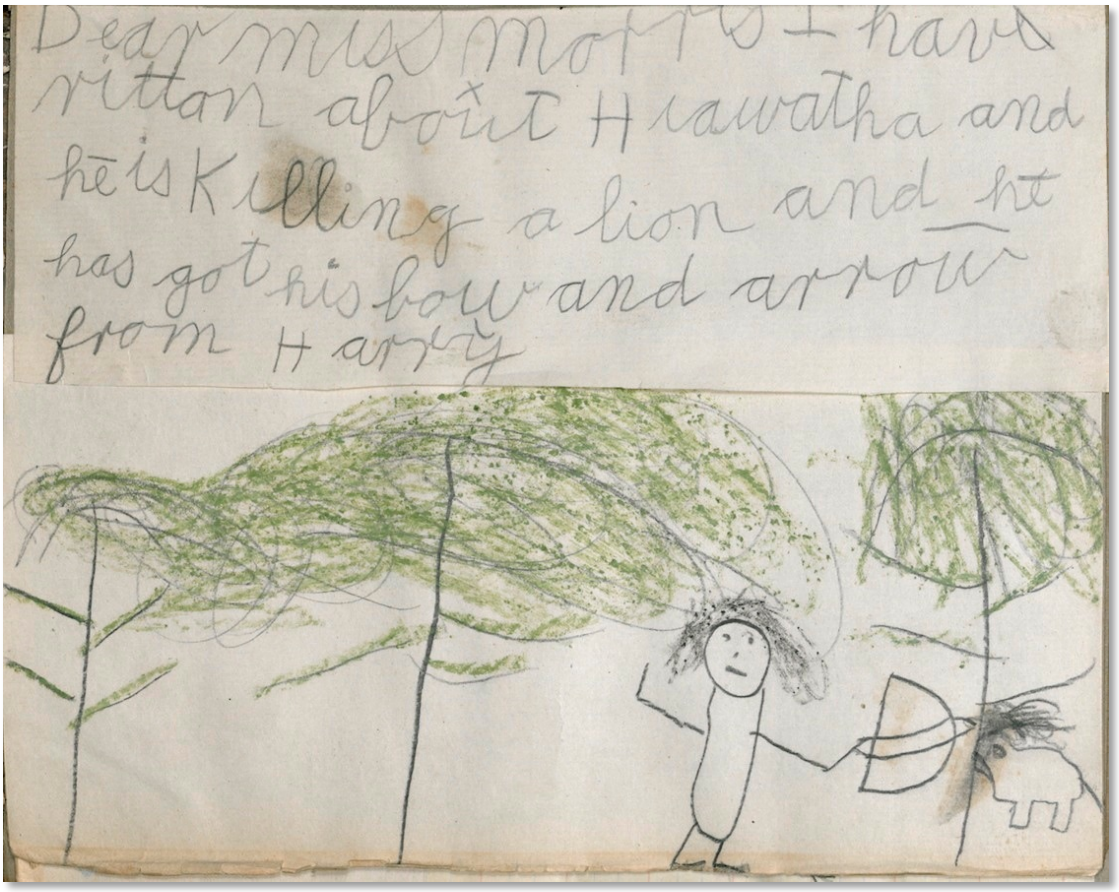


Figure 4. Harry's drawing and text[36]

In a curriculum otherwise largely dominated by European values and knowledge, it is interesting to see that the children's learning also included the study of Māori culture. In March 1922, Miss Morris' class, having spent time learning about Māori culture, visited the Museum 'to see the Māori section, and showed that they knew very well the names and uses of the exhibition'.[37] The Association's interest reflects perhaps the wider shift in thinking towards a specifically New Zealand identity, in particular after 1907 when the colony acquired Dominion status.

[36] Constance Barnes Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-8169-Harry.
[37] Women in Print, *The Evening Post*, 8 March 1922, p. 9.

Also influential in influencing a cultural dimension within the Association were two New Zealand writers: Edith Howes and Johannes Anderson. Both supported and contributed to the Association's understanding of Māori cultural worldviews. A prolific writer of children's books, Howes offered children stories 'set in their own country with characters, dialogue, and natural life they could identify with and relate to'.[38] Johannes Andersen, husband to WFKA council member Catherine Andersen, was 'an established Pakeha authority' on the Māori. In his newspaper articles and his lectures to teachers and others, he sought to promote greater awareness of Māori within colonial New Zealand.[39]

Further references to the primary class are scanty. Staff organised outings as treats for children. As pupil Harry Johnston writes (in a story short of full stops) of one such occasion: 'One day we went by train to Miss Rileys place afterwards we made a bonfire and then we washed ourselves and we came home we had a lovely time'. On another occasion Miss Morris invited the children to her home where they 'had fairy fishing ponds, peanuts & mints and all the games dear to children & a most wonderful tea party'.[40] The children's departure at the end of two years brought sadness amongst staff. Miss Riley, the then principal, writes warmly of their departure in her monthly report: 'Many of the children have gone to the State school and we of course are struggling with new ones. It seems that just as we have them awake and moving well that we have to part with them'.[41]

All in all, the work of the class and their teacher, Miss Morris was going well. Miss Riley offers praise in her annual report for 1925:

> I would like to stress the fine work done in the Primary Class at Taranaki Street, where Miss Morris has been for some years … Miss Morris gives a course of ten lectures in primary methods. Such an experience with a conscientious, capable teacher is of very great value to students when they go out to positions in schools, and makes our certificates of greater value.[42]

Then, in December 1927, WFKA's Council announced the primary class was to be discontinued. The reason given was 'in order that more children of kindergarten age could be accommodated'.[43] But it seems the seeds of the demise were sown earlier. The on-going shortage of students limited the 'opportunities for trainees to be freed from their morning kindergarten placements to gain experience in the primary class, despite efforts to bring in

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[38] Friends of the Dorothy Neal White Collection Notes Books Authors (1991); http://www.dnwfriends.nzl.org/dnwbooks/nba4.html

[39] P. J. Gibbons. Andersen, Johannes Carl. Biographical entry from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography:* http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3a15/andersen-johannes-carl

[40] Miss Riley, Principal's Report for November 1927, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association; Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX2524.

[41] Miss Riley, Principal's Report for July 1923, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association; Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX2524.

[42] Mrs Peacock, President's Report, WFKA Report of Kindergartens for year ending March 31st, 1925.

[43] Mrs Peacock, President's Report, WFKA Report of Kindergartens for year ending March 31st, 1925, p. 6.

volunteers as substitutes'.[44] The on-going struggle to raise funds and its failure to gain further financial support from the Government almost certainly contributed to the decision. A meeting was held in 1926 with the Association and the then Director of Education, Mr J Caughley, 'on various aspects of the movement and the future before it'.[45] The news was not good. 'We in the Department', said Mr Caughley,

> look upon the work of the kindergarten chiefly for its social value although its educational lines are quite sound. But if we looked at it purely from the educational side I don't know that the department would be so keen on fostering kindergarten work on the present lines.[46]

Mr Caughley supported the proposed extension of kindergarten on its present lines. What he could not support were closer connections with infant schools and increased monetary assistance. Further, he countered the Association's request that more should be done for the students trained in kindergarten work by suggesting that more were being trained than could be given permanent work:

> The government could not be expected to help, for there was little prospect for the young people being trained. They could not be taken into primary schools on the same footing as ordinary teachers, who had better training.[47]

The article ends: 'Mr Caughley fielded many questions at the close of his address'.[48]

Without government support there was little the Association could do. The Free Kindergarten Association reverted back to the provision of education for children up to five years after which they were enrolled in primary schools.

Edna Morris was appointed as Director of the Newtown Kindergarten and transferred later that year back to Taranaki Street. In 1930, she left to become Infant Mistress at her old school, Samuel Marsden College where she remained until her retirement.[49] The issue of how kindergarten teacher trainees would gain school experience was resolved in 1928 with the introduction of reciprocal arrangements between the two institutions, enabling kindergarten trainees to spent fortnightly observation periods in local infant schools.[50]

The Association did implement changes to kindergarten pedagogy for younger children and to considerations as to the training of teachers. Some of the earlier formal work gave way to freer progressive methods designed to

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[44] Miss Riley, Principal's Report for March 1922, Wellington Free Kindergarten Association; Alexander Turnbull Library, MSX2524.
[45] The Kindergarten Future Work for Trainees, *The Evening Post,* 6 August 1926, p. 12.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid
[49] Marjorie Connell, WFKA Graduates, 1979; Correspondence and related papers including a transcript of an interview with Marjorie Connell (née Seed), and a report on the Rachel Reynolds Kindergarten; Hocken Library MG-1894.
[50] Free Kindergarten, *The Evening Post*, 6 December 1928, p. 15.

promote self-expression, self-development and self reliance. WKFA's stalwart, Maud England, writing in 1929, states that:

> 'Free Work' and 'Free Play' is encouraged as the best means by which the rapidly developing child may be helped to acquire self-control and self-knowledge. Such work to be successful needs even more carefully trained teachers than in the past.[51]

CONCLUSION

The nineteenth century progressive movement belief that 'what was best for children under 8 years was kindergarten pedagogy taught by teachers trained in kindergarten methods', strongly influenced the aspirations of the free kindergarten movement that emerged at this time. Whilst late nineteenth century education policies restricted free kindergarten provision to the enrolment of children under school age, the movement maintained their opposition to traditional school practices operating in junior schools and advocated for Froebelian-based education provision for children over the first two years of formal schooling. Kindergarten associations included in their respective policies and practices active support for kindergarten pedagogy operating in infant schools. They argued their teacher training programmes graduated kindergarten trained teachers for work in junior schools and that their play-based pedagogy prepared children for schooling. The 1919 decision to offer infant primary classes for school age children marked a significant change of focus. The Wellington Free Kindergarten Association in setting up a primary class argued they had the resources needed in the form of a new building with gardens, suitably qualified staff and the support of their families. Whilst the ideological argument for education reform remained strong amongst supporters of Froebel's teachings, long-term change proved more complex than realised. The primary class at Taranaki Street Kindergarten, like many other earlier progressive educational initiatives, was of a short-term nature; a result of lack of mainstream support, financial constraints and the weight of the examination system in schools. Yet advocacy of a play-based pedagogy for children aged five and six years of age remained with spurts of activity such as in the 1930s with the work of the New Education Fellowship, in the 'Playway'[52] system that followed post-World War II and more recently in the emergence of an early years approach to learning for children from birth to eight with its emphasis on greater continuity of experience for children over this time.

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[51] N.Z. Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand. (1928). *New Zealand Free Kindergartens: A brief sketch of the growth of the Free Kindergarten Associations of the Dominion*. Dunedin: Free Kindergarten Union of New Zealand, p. 4.

[52] Progressive education teaching methods used by teachers to approach syllabus topics through both children's interests and, wherever possible, their first-hand experience. Also known as activity methods.

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